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ROBERT F. DRINAN: Can we ban land mines?

COMMONWEAL

$2.00 February 25, 1994

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Middle East Accords

ABIGAIL McCARTHY
Call me Ms.

DAVID R. CARLIN, Jr.
Date rape fallacies

BOOKS

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ROBERT WORTH on two environmental studies

JOHN B. BRESLIN on Mary Gordon

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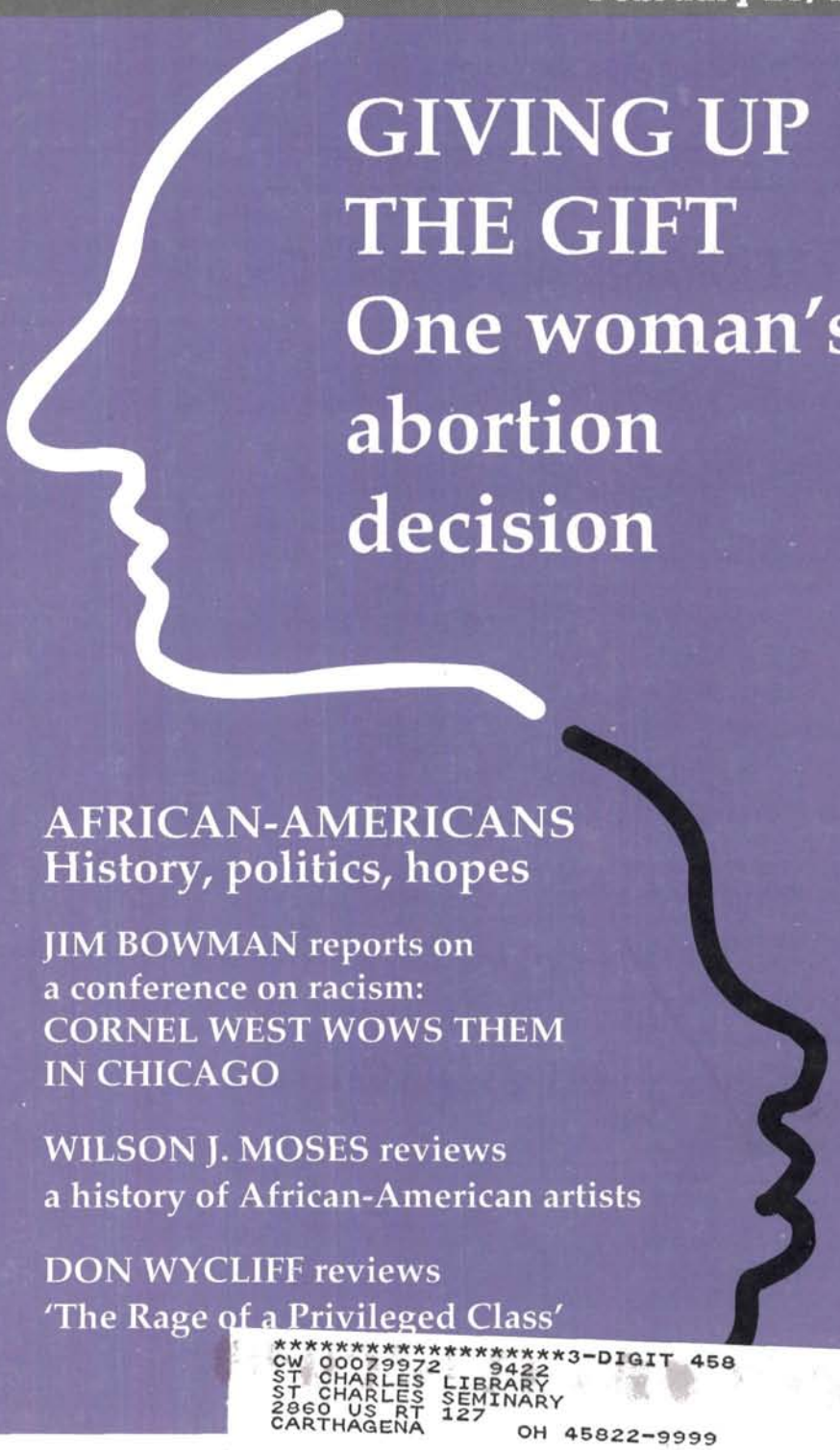

GIVING UP THE GIFT
One woman's abortion decision

AFRICAN-AMERICANS
History, politics, hopes

JIM BOWMAN reports on a conference on racism: CORNEL WEST WOWS THEM IN CHICAGO

WILSON J. MOSES reviews a history of African-American artists

DON WYCLIFF reviews 'The Rage of a Privileged Class'

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CORRESPONDENCE

The splendor of irony

Newton Centre, Mass.

To the Editors: As a graduate of the University of Notre Dame and a Master's student in the theology department of Boston College, I welcomed your editorial concerning the recent *motu proprio*, *Victoriae splendor* ["Numero Uno," January 28]. The humiliation of having to endure the 41-39 loss to BC while living in the midst of the Eagle faithful; the financial sting of having to pay Professor Stephen Pope [*Commonweal*, March 12, 1993] the spoils after giving him a thirty-point spread (yes, thirty…); the despair of the first week of January in the face of the violence wrought by the nation's Mace-wielding subjectivists (with Patrick Jordan [November 5, 1993], Notre Dame alums somberly agree that mugging must surely be *intrinsece malum*); not to mention the countless hours spent studying the ponderous prose of *Veritatis splendor* and ploughing through all the commentaries—all of these painful realities of the last semester were redeemed in one brilliant essay, and I thank you.

MARY LEE FREEMAN, ND '91

'Numero Uno' is tops

Worcester, Mass.

To the Editors: I was thoroughly delighted by your "Numero Uno" editorial—a real hoot. I hope it can be a sign unto others that it's possible to be serious about Catholicism and still be funny, without being nasty. TOM SHANNON

Prof. steals exam!

Notre Dame, Ind.

To the Editors: I rarely—in fact, never—find the time to write letters to the editor, but in this case I cannot resist.

"Numero Uno" was so cleverly rendered, insightful, and wry that the essay accomplished two things for me:

1. It caused me to laugh out loud several times, an exercise I should perform daily rather than monthly (if that);

2. It provided the text of the final exam for my Notre Dame undergraduate course in "Contemporary American Catholicism." I shall simply reproduce the essay, with four words of direction added: *Explain the satirical allusions.*

Come to think of it, the essay also serves as a neat introduction to the Weaver-Appleby project on "Mapping American Catholicism!"

Thanks for providing 1,000 inspired, funny, and gentle words for poll-watchers and Pole-watchers alike.

SCOTT APPLEBY

'Disputed Question'

The five articles on aspects of homosexuality published in the issue of January 28 have drawn an unusual number of responses from readers. A selection of letters will be published in the issue of March 11.

Single-payer makes sense

Hingham, Mass.

To the Editors: Christopher Koller's "Health Care Reform: Good Plan, Major Flaw" [January 14] doesn't deal with the overriding problem of the Clinton plan, which is the enormous waste of money from duplicate administrative costs in the private health-care insurance industry. For the author to claim that a single-payer plan would not work in the U.S. because Americans are different from Canadians is sheer nonsense.

BENEDICT J. DUFFY, M.D.

Market bureaucracies

Commerce, Tex.

To the Editors: Christopher F. Koller's assessment of the outlook for health-care reform is an exercise in obfuscation, which is understandable from an HMO employee. Although he dismisses President Bill Clinton's proposal as dead on arrival, he expects that some variant of "managed competition" will eventually emerge.

Mr. Koller acknowledges that the clearest alternative is the Canadian system of direct state financing, and that it has strong support in Congess. But he downplays the alternative—first by damning it with faint praise, and then by attacking it with innuendo. "Detractors," he says, "raise the specter of socialized medicine." Next, he writes, "single-payer plans face...a public wary of government bureaucracy and any hint of limits to treatment options."

The charge of "socialism" is a standard ploy of those who oppose change in the American health industry, but the label does not fit the Canadian system. Canadian doctors are not state employees but private entrepreneurs who bill their provincial governments for their services. The great majority of Canadian hospitals are privately owned and contract with their governments for operating expenses. Canadian residents are free to choose among them, without even the slight limitations Mr. Koller finds acceptable in the expanded HMO system he favors.

It is well to keep in mind that "bureaucracy" is not synonymous with "govern-

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Waiting for Godot

Last August, Susan Sontag, the American writer, went to Sarajevo to direct Samuel Beckett's play, *Waiting for Godot*. Against criticism that doing theater in the midst of a siege was an affront to the tragedy of the Sarajevans, Sontag replied that more than a few of them "feel strengthened and consoled by having their sense of reality affirmed and transfigured by art," and "far from it being frivolous to put on a play...it is a serious expression of normality." As for the choice of *Godot*, perhaps nothing could have been more emblematic: "During the long tragic silence of the Vladimirs and Estragons which follows the messenger's announcement that Mr. Godot isn't coming today, but will surely come tomorrow,...my eyes begin to sting with tears....No one in the audience made a sound" (*New York Review of Books*, October 21, 1993).

Sarajevo along with the other besieged Bosnian cities and towns have perhaps, after twenty-two months of war, developed a wholly other sense of reality than they had before the war. Was the silence of Sontag's audience a stunned recognition that hoping against the odds is a delusion, pure and simple? Or do they cling still to the improbable chance that Mr. Godot will come tomorrow, that Messrs. Clinton, Major, Mitterand will take a decisive step to lift the Serbian siege?

Last August threats of NATO attacks against Serbian artillery brought a respite from the shelling. But to no avail. The Bosnians refused the division of their country, the Owen-Vance plan devised by the European community. The Serbs and Croatians refused concessions that would have provided for the territorial and economic integrity of Bosnia, measures that would have allowed the country, if only in rump form, to actually function as an independent entity. The United States stood by the Bosnians. The Serbs resumed their shelling. The decision not to respond with NATO air strikes against the Serbs was buried in obfuscating indecision. The siege continued.

The first weeks of February saw a flurry of renewed diplomatic activity and announcements focused once again on threats to permit NATO bombing of the Serb artillery pounding Sarajevo. Do the new calls for air attacks and a more public American presence at the Geneva talks presage a real breakthrough in lifting the siege? Or are they so much smoke and mirrors? Will heightened international scrutiny and a streamlined UN decision-making process for air attacks force the Serbs to stand down in Sarajevo? Or is all of this just a prelude to Western withdrawal from Bosnia?

It is very hard to sort through the information and disinformation that surround efforts both to advance and to paper over the differing goals of Europe and the United States in the former Yugoslavia. The warring factions—Serbs, Croats, and Bosnians—are themselves riven by internal differences. President Milosevic of Serbia has only a tenuous hold on the Serbian militias in Bosnia, yet his military continues to fight there and support the militias. President Tudjman of Croatia, who has played a double game with both Serbs and Bosnians, has allowed

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Croatian militias to undermine the alliance that Croats had maintained with Muslims in Herzegovina, the western part of the country. In the meantime, Muslim forces within the Bosnian army have increased by sheer dint of the number of refugees created by both Serb and Croat ethnic cleansing; the Muslims are fighting to return to their homes and villages. The Bosnians are being armed by the Arab states and there are reports of Islamic fighters, the *mujahidin*, in their midst; this cannot be good news for the moderates who now lead the government.

The situation in Bosnia becomes ever more desperate and a solution ever more elusive. That is why the current flurry of threats and maneuvers may turn out to be a shield behind which Britain and France are working toward the withdrawal of the UN peacekeeping force. The United States has been drawn in on the European side, at least in this sense: we will now be the ones pressuring the Bosnians to settle. If we are not careful, this could well mean that the Serbs and with them the Croats will declare victory and annex what they have gained through ethnic cleansing. Not only would this give *ex post facto* approval of aggression, it would guarantee that the Bosnian army, now largely Muslim, would begin a protracted guerrilla war to win back their homes. Though there is little possibility of an agreement that would restore the pre-war boundaries, the terms of a settlement must insure the government and people of Bosnia a politically and economically viable state.

If the February initiatives are anything other than one last show of resolve on the part of the West, and if the Serbs do not observe the terms of the UN-NATO ultimatum, there must certainly be air strikes against Serb artillery. UN troops must extend the buffer around Sarajevo sufficiently to end Serbian attacks. And then the siege of Sarajevo must be lifted by removing the Serb roadblocks that surround the city. Eventually this process will need to be repeated in other besieged cities and towns. The Serbs must eventually concede territory and grant recognition to the Bosnian government.

In order for this to happen, the Serbs must know that Europe and the Unites States are deadly serious, and that what they threaten will be carried out. Air attacks on supply routes, including bridges that join Serbian-held Bosnia to Serbia, may become necessary. Nor should such attacks against Croatian supply routes be ruled out. Weapons, at least defensive ones, must be supplied the Bosnian army. And finally there should be a threat (with intent to carry through) of increasing UN forces, including probably U.S. ground forces. What this adds up to is a gradual, but inexorable series of threats and carry-throughs that will convince the Serbs they have nothing further to gain in Bosnia, and much to lose. All of this must be done in a manner that will convince all of the parties, Bosnians, Croats, and Serbs, that they have extracted as much as they can from war. Of course, this policy may fail.

But what is the alternative to a firm commitment? If NATO and the UN are not prepared to enforce their will, if the allied forces simply withdraw, there is no reason to believe that Serb forces will rest content with their gains to date. We could see a further swallowing up of territory, accompanied by more large-scale slaughter, especially of the citizens of Sarajevo, Tuzla, and other besieged Bosnian enclaves. The implication for any sort of tolerable world order would be disastrous.

Is President Clinton capable of standing behind a firm policy? Is anyone in his administration? Does the United States actually have a foreign policy? We shall see.

We are all waiting for Godot.

NOTEBOOK

FEAR OF FLYING

UNRAVELING WITH MICHAEL & LIZ

We went to Florida before Christmas to visit with my wife's parents. We flew. To be honest, I'm not wild about flying. Like anything else, the more unfamiliar you are with it the more forbidding it seems. Neither my checkbook nor my professional or familial responsibilities have allowed me to do much jet setting. My last plane flight may have been ten years ago and I've repressed the details. Yes, I get the jitters, and besides, the whole idea of jet propulsion unnerves me. I know the laws of physics explain how you can fire up one end of these patently flimsy "fuselages" and quite matter-of-factly negotiate the inexorable demands of gravity, but I still feel as though I'm being ushered into a kind of tin can to which some sadistic fiend has done little more than light a fuse.

Naturally, my thoughts turn morbid under such extreme conditions, especially when the passenger next to me can only offer the tight-lipped smile of someone about to undergo dental work. On the Florida flight we flew through a storm, or what the captain reassuringly called "a slight bit of turbulence." Later, as I gazed down wistfully at the miniature but recognizable world below, I was struck by what I suppose is the mundane or adolescent realization that one's expectations about death matter. From my perch 10,000 feet above the wintry Atlantic coast, it suddenly dawned on me that, contrary to the common assumption made about believers' "infantile" longings for heaven, it is the agnostic or the atheist who faces the cheerier prospect about death. As I obsessively contemplated the remote chance that we might at any moment simply drop out of the sky, I was convinced that the prospect of mere oblivion was much to be preferred to the possibility of judgment, whatever the possible reward.

God and the judgment of individual souls may indeed be an absurdity, as a dear friend of mine observed when I made this point to him, but oblivion, not the afterlife, is the more comforting scenario. Of course there are various forms of oblivion, perhaps the worst being the sort you actually have to live through. For example, being forced to think about Tonya Harding, Lorena Bobbitt, or Michael Jackson is a kind of annihilation

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of the self. I felt this acutely while taking a pre-dawn shuttle bus from our motel to the Orlando airport for the flight back to New York.

There were only two other passengers in the small van, a couple from South Africa as it turned out. The driver fancied himself a kind of tour guide—even in the dark—and didn't stop talking during the entire twenty-minute ride. First he explained why he had moved to Florida from Cleveland. "Haven't regretted it for a minute," he boasted. Apparently there was nothing for the kids to do in Cleveland. That's how kids get into trouble, especially drugs, he explained. In Orlando his kids avoid such temptations by regularly visiting the various Disney World attractions. "There's always something to do here," he said. I found this implausible, or if true a justifiable excuse, not a prophylactic, for drug use.

"That over there, that's going to be the new Bob Hope Museum," the driver said, pointing to some nondescript terrain. A Bob Hope museum? I shuddered. Right next to Mickey and Minnie and Donald and Snow White? Another incentive for drug use, I surmised, and made a mental note not to move to the Greater Orlando area.

"And that hotel, the one with the yellow lights, that's where Michael Jackson stays when he's in town. Takes over the whole top floor up there," the driver said excitedly.

For the next ten minutes we were subjected to a lengthy tribute to "Michael," testimony to all the good he'd done for "kids," an explanation of Michael's own troubled childhood, and a skeptical view of the accusations of child molestation against him.

"I'm not saying he's innocent. I mean, any thirty-five-year-old man who plays with children has got problems, right? I understand that. I just hope he's innocent. He's done a lot of good, you know."

"Hasn't he," the South African woman spoke up sympathetically. "He raised quite a lot of money with that 'We Are the World' song, didn't he?"

"Being Michael, well it can't be easy," the driver said. "He could settle that case out of court. What's it to him? What's a few million to him? I mean a million dollars for him is like ten dollars to us. I'm not kidding. It's like ten bucks. And everybody wants a piece of him. When you have that much money you don't have any friends, you got what are called associates. You know what I mean? Even his family. Now that's sad. Just associates. That's what it's like. You kinda understand why he prefers kids, you know?"

"No, it doesn't seem fair, does it," said the woman. "But don't you think Elizabeth Taylor has been his friend?"

"Well, you got a point there," the driver agreed. "Yeah, you'd have to say that Elizabeth Taylor is just about the only person Michael can really sit down with and unravel with."

This malapropism I judged to be a moment of poetic truth. The image of Michael Jackson and Elizabeth Taylor unraveling together put my apprehensions about flying and my expectations of the afterlife into perspective. Whatever the future held in store, surely Michael Jackson and Elizabeth Taylor would be but bit players. By the time we arrived at the terminal, I was eager to board the plane and face my fate. PAUL BAUMANN

DANGER UNDER FOOT

CAN WE BAN LAND MINES?

THEY KILL ANYONE

Land mines kill people, or maim them, because they're hidden. Most are buried, some are camouflaged. Step on one of them, or brush past its tripwire, and you're dead, or legless. Land mines cannot distinguish between the footfall of a soldier or a child or an old woman gathering firewood. Land mines recognize no cease-fire; a generation after the fighting has stopped, they can destroy the children of the soldiers who laid them.

Land mines are hidden not only physically but metaphorically; few people in this or other developed countries understand either the scope or the frightfulness of the problem they pose. Tens of millions of mines lie in wait in dozens of countries. According to a 1993 American Red Cross statement issued by Elizabeth Dole, exploding mines kill 800 people every month and injure another 450. Their presence not only endangers lives but makes much land too dangerous for farming or for resettlement of refugees. Yet until recently this enormous and still growing problem has had little attention.

That situation is beginning to change, so much so that one can ponder whether this lasting scourge of war may eventually be controlled and then, over decades, be eliminated. In October of last year a Boston-based nongovernmental organization called Physicians for Social Responsibility, an affiliate of Human Rights Watch, issued a 510-page report, "Land Mines, A Deadly Legacy." A media breakthrough was a comprehensive cover story, "It's the Little Bombs that Kill You," by Donovan Webster, published in the *New York Times Magazine* for January 24. Thanks largely to the leadership of U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), some progress has been made on the political front as well. Late last year Congress passed and President Bill Clinton signed into law a bill extending for three years a ban on all land mines first enacted in 1992, and he urged forty other states to follow suit. Last December 16 the United Nations General Assembly called for a worldwide ban on the export of these cheap, deadly devices.

Realistically, however, the steps taken to date are feeble compared with the magnitude of the problem. In his *Time* piece, Donovan Webster reports that in the former Yugoslavia some 60,000 new mines are laid each week, adding to a worldwide total of uncleared mines variously estimated at 85 million in fifty-six countries (the U.S. State Department) to 105 million or more in sixty-two nations (the United Nations).

Previous efforts at control are not reassuring. The first major attempt at regulation was the Land Mines Protocol of 1980, which has now been ratified by thirty-six nations (not includ-

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ing the United States, which has signed but not ratified the treaty). But the protocol stops short of banning the use of land mines outright; it forbids their use for military objectives in ways that violate international humanitarian law. In practice, the measure has proved porous and unenforceable.

In its exhaustive study, Physicians for Social Responsibility concluded that though land mines may be deployed for legitimate military purposes, they pose so catastrophic a threat to civilians that they must be outlawed. The report described the accumulation of the mines as "the equivalent of a weapon of mass destruction in slow motion." Since land mines in vast quantities have been sowed by governments and guerrillas in Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, El Salvador, Iraqi-Kurdistan, Kuwait, Mozambique, Nicaragua, and Somalia, among other nations, the PSR report had reason to declare that the mines are "aimed particularly at the developing world."

Since, by their nature, land mines are incapable of discriminating among targets, it would appear that the PSR analysis is in line with traditional just-war theory. The seven parts of that doctrine make clear that indiscriminate attacks on noncombatants can never be justified.

The United States appears to be moving toward acceptance of that approach. The export ban is one indicator. Earlier—in February 1993—the State Department established a group to collaborate with the Pentagon in developing a comprehensive global strategy to allocate U.S. de-mining resources, and in the following two-month period the U.S. Army conducted its first de-mining training for foreign instructors at Fort Benning, Georgia. To be effective, however, such efforts must be multiplied many times over, and very significant costs must be incurred. Webster quotes a UN source who estimates that cleaning up the mines now in place will cost from $200 billion to $300 billion. Removal can cost from $300 to $1,000 a mine, though the devices themselves cost as little as $3 for an antipersonnel weapon, $26 for an antitank mine.

There is reason for the United States to take the initiative in such efforts, since it was American forces that laid significant numbers of the mines now awaiting clearing. Both sides in the Vietnam war planted mines by the millions. A Pentagon study cited by Deborah Shapley in her biography of Robert McNamara, former secretary of defense, concludes that from one-fifth to a third of all U.S. deaths in Vietnam were caused by mines, many of them laid from the air by American planes but later triggered by American infantrymen as they advanced or retreated through mine-saturated areas: another reminder that mines are indifferent to the identity of their victims.

The United States furnished an estimated 37,000 antipersonel land mines to government forces in El Salvador. The Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front used countless unsophisticated mines as well, and the State Department now estimates that 20,000 mines remain uncleared in El Salvador. In Nicaragua, though the Sandinistas made much use of land mines in their struggle against the Somoza government, it was the U.S.-financed *contras* that laid the majority of mines that have killed or injured Nicaraguan civilians. An international effort to clear the mines in Nicaragua aims to remove 60,000 of them—about half the estimated total in place—by August 1994. It is nerve-shattering work, even when carried out by well-trained and well-armored specialists; Donovan Webster reports that some eighty-three experts at the task have been killed in Kuwait since the end of the Gulf War.

Obviously it is work that must continue. The silent menace of unexploded land mines daily creates personal and family tragedies by the dozens, while also posing serious impediments to the repatriation of refugees, the progress of economic development, and the achievement of political stability in scores of poor countries. Even more important than mine-clearing is the development of political will to ban the production and sale of what a State Department report has labeled the "hidden killers." It is time and past time to attach to land mines the stigma that is now shared by nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons.

ROBERT F. DRINAN

Robert F. Drinan, S.J., is professor of law at the Georgetown University Law Center in Washington, D.C.

REPORT FROM CHICAGO

A CONFERENCE ON RACISM
CORNEL WEST WOWS THEM

At a bishops-sponsored conference on racism February 2-5 at Chicago's Bismarck Hotel, "Healing the Past...Creating the Future," the goal was to advance the cause of "racial harmony," as newly appointed Belleville Bishop Wilton D. Gregory, a Chicagoan and the meeting's honorary chairman, phrased it in the opening session. Harmony prevailed at the conference itself. What little disagreement there was developed along the heart vs. head spectrum by which such gatherings are often measured.

A young West Side pastor quizzed two speakers about what he considered "a new conspiracy in our country" of government and others against young black males, making them scapegoats for drug-makers and shippers. We should be concerned not so much about gang-bangers, the priest said, as about "people in three-piece suits" who profit mightily from their endeavors. He drew instant applause from the 300 or so conference participants.

Clarence Page of the *Chicago Tribune* responded with the observation that it's "a complex problem." "Blacks don't fly the planes that bring the drugs into this country," he noted. "On the other hand, the pilots don't kill anybody on street corners." The *Washington Post*'s Thomas Edsall found the priest's explanation "too facile. It's too easy to blame outsiders. A conspiracy notion is comforting, but it doesn't really answer problems." (Edsall's book *Chain Reaction*, which examined the disaffection of blue-collar Democrats on issues of race and taxes,

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provided some of the starting ideas for conference organizers.)

Neither Page nor Edsall got applause for these answers.

There was much applause, on the other hand, for the conference's keynote speaker, the encyclopedic and histrionic author-professor Cornel West, even if he was short on concrete solutions. Asked by a young participant where she might start in working toward racial unity, West lamely ticked off a list of programs and agencies. His strong suit was wrenching guts, not organizing or even strategizing. The audience loved him. They came from the Archdiocese of Chicago and the five Illinois dioceses which comprise the church "province" headed by Cardinal Joseph Bernardin. The sponsoring body, The Catholic Conference of Illinois, is a public policy arm of the Illinois bishops comparable to the U.S. Catholic Conference. The Chicago meeting, a first for any state bishops' agency, came out of what Jim Lund, head of the archdiocese's peace and justice office and co-chair of the conference, said was a desire to show how racism permeates our lives, ever present, never visible. "The conference

Medical progress

Despite the recently announced opposition of the Business Round Table, two news reports from late last year might be hopeful signs for President Bill Clinton's health-care reform plan. On December 16, leaders of ten organizations representing over 300,000 physicians appeared with the president in a photo-op to show their support for his plan. And earlier in the month, the governing body of the American Medical Association, whose numbers have declined to well under 300,000, met in New Orleans and were reported as seriously split over policy and strategy regarding the president's plan.

These two incidents are a far cry from the post-World War II 1940s when a unified and powerful AMA was primarily responsible for the failure of President Harry Truman's national health-insurance proposal. Although the idea of some kind of national health-care plan had been kicking around at the national level since before World War I, no president had put it on the national agenda until November 16, 1945, when Truman unveiled a comprehensive national health-insurance proposal. The plan called for health care to be financed and administered like Social Security. It would be paid through a 3 percent payroll tax, half by employers and half by employees, and would cover medical, hospital, and nursing care for all Americans. Participants would be free to choose their own doctors who in turn would be paid according to a fee schedule negotiated by doctors and the government.

Of the various groups that immediately opposed the idea, the most powerful was the American Medical Association. Led by Dr. Morris Fishbein, long-time editor of the *AMA Journal*, and bankrolled by a massive AMA war chest fattened by assessing members an extra $25 each, the organization launched a media blitz. Its ads reportedly reached 10,000 newspapers and 16,000 radio stations. Fishbein had long been a vigorous opponent of attempts to reform or extend medical care. He fought the idea of group practice among doctors, prepaid medical and hospital plans, and the extension of Social Security benefits to the disabled under sixty-five.

Ironically, polls taken even before Truman introduced his plan indicated the public was very supportive of government health insurance. In 1942 a *Fortune* magazine poll found nearly 75 percent in favor and a Gallup Poll the following year found 59 percent in favor.

Yet, the AMA labeled Truman's plan "socialized medicine" and the name stuck. The AMA claimed the plan would "enslave" doctors, regiment society, and lead to a totalitarian state in America. At a time when Eastern Europe and China were falling to the Communists, this theme stuck a chord with the public. Truman's plan did not get off the ground, and government health insurance was not even mentioned in the 1948 Democratic Party National Platform. In spite of Truman's come-from-behind re-election, government health insurance was a dead issue for the rest of his term.

In the next administration, Dwight Eisenhower put forth a $15-million federal reinsurance plan to protect private health insurance companies from abnormal losses in order to encourage them to broaden their benefits and clientele. The AMA attacked this plan as a foot-in-the-door scheme that would lead to "socialized medicine." Like the National Rifle Association today, the AMA feared that any compromise on its part would lead to total defeat. The AMA also fought President Lyndon Johnson's Medicare proposal. It took a monumental effort on Johnson's part (he was an expert political charmer and arm-twister) to get Medicare through Congress.

Today, not only the AMA but the whole health-care industry is divided over the Clinton plan. Instead of "socialized medicine," the scare phrase is "choice," or rather the supposed loss of it under Clinton's proposal. Apparently those who put forth this argument are unaware that a great many Americans don't have much choice now under employer-provided plans which include "participating physicians." Of course, patients can choose doctors outside their plan, but they have to pay extra for that choice.

Many in the current AMA leadership are anxious not to be branded this time around as obstructionists or concerned only with their own self-interest. This is certainly a welcome change in AMA attitudes. Too bad it comes nearly fifty years late.

WILLIAM L. HOGEBOOM

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was intended to unify blacks and non-blacks, even as it exposed the "sin of racism." This was to be "the start of a transforming action in Illinois," Lund told the assembly. So there were gatherings of "delegations" from the six dioceses, people delegated not to this meeting but by it, informally, to return home and spread the word and carry on the fight, whatever shape it would take.

The audience responded warmly to black Baptist keynoter West, whose style was part-preacher, part-professor, part—dare I say it?—nightclub performer. He romanced the microphone with extended sesquipedalian sequences (two can play at that game), his voice sometimes breathy, sometimes flat, and sometimes like nothing more than the voice of the Thin Man's wife's at the end of the weekly radio show, sleepy and cracked. Shades of Myrna Loy?

T.S. Eliot, John Dewey, John Brown, Daniel Berrigan, Abraham Heschel, Thomas Jefferson (for his slaveholding), Robert Penn Warren (for writing about it), Henry Ford (for trashing history), Walt Whitman, Jack Kerouac (for being rootless, like Americans in general) struggled for mention in West's crowded text. There was a quote from Malcolm X: "A nigger is defined as a victim of American democracy"; and the self-exiled francophile Josephine Baker: "The very idea of America makes me shake." West didn't want to "demonize" people, he said. "I can empathize with you even if you hate me," he reported he had told whites recently in Cairo, Illinois, which is as far south as you can get in the state of Illinois. American "market culture" could use a little demonizing, however. It "pushes virtue to the periphery" and makes "base performance" the goal. On top of that, he added, it's where young blacks learn "gangster sensibilities."

"What if black nationalists are right?" he asked. In that case, we would face the "slow, slippery slope to chaos and anarchy." Retreating from apocalypse, West closed affirming his "audacious hope" that we can avoid that. "But I'm not optimistic," he finally concluded, recommending a "leap of faith, energizing and holding on to each other and to the ultimate power."

Later, newsman Page, himself an African-American, questioned West's references to elites who control things. "What does he want to do?" Page asked. "Some remedies are worse than the disease." Instead of redistributing wealth, Page recommended "expanding the [economic] pie."

Addressing the controversy about antisemitic, antiwhite, and antipapal statements by Kalid Abdul Muhammad, Nation of Islam spokesman last November at Kean College in New Jersey, a questioner wondered why so much was made of it, while so little was made of remarks about blacks by Senator Ernest Hollings. It was a matter of manipulating the media, said Page. Nobody paid attention to the New Jersey speech until the frustrated Anti-Defamation League publicized it. "If you're upset, you have to make an issue of it," he said.

Thomas Edsall added, "The media makes too much of all these things, rather than to the reality we have to face. We pay too much attention to these bizarre and off-the-wall comments." This time, Edsall got applause.

What now? The conference heard Newark auxiliary Bishop Joseph Francis urge use of the admittedly little known 1979 national bishops' statement on racism to combat it. Eleven workshops directed at more specific problems—education, college life, pastoral ministry, housing, etc.—offered something for everybody. Ideally each diocese now would hold a racism conference of its own, geared to local specifics. Given proper doses of heart-and-head harmony, this one may have had the desired jump-start effect. JIM BOWMAN

Jim Bowman is author of Bending the Rules: What American Priests Tell American Catholics, *due from Crossroad in June.*

WORLD WATCH

J. Bryan Hehir

HOPE FROM THE MIDDLE EAST

TWO PROMISING PACTS

The pattern of world politics in 1993 illustrated just how violent and chaotic the post-cold war era could be. Freed of the specter of global cataclysm, nations and states, as well as tribes and clans, demonstrated that peace is not the inevitable product of the new order of world affairs. Conflicts that are local in scope, ancient in lineage, and brutal in character defied both the plans of diplomats and minimal standards of humanity. The exception to this depressing pattern has been the Middle East. In a year where Bosnia exploded, Somalia collapsed into chaos, and Haiti deteriorated to the point of civil dissolution, the Middle East produced two major events of hope.

On September 13, 1993, Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization signed the Declaration of Principles which established the framework for addressing the issues that have been at the heart of five wars in the region. On December 30, 1993, Israel and the Vatican signed a Fundamental Agreement which opened a new and potentially expansive agenda between two central players in the religious-political dynamic of the Middle East.

Neither event ended killing or conflict in the region; the media report incidents of violence and death weekly. Israeli and Palestinian families continue to bury their casualties in spite of diplomatic breakthroughs and declarations of principles. In spite of these human tragedies, it is crucial to recognize that the region, which pro-

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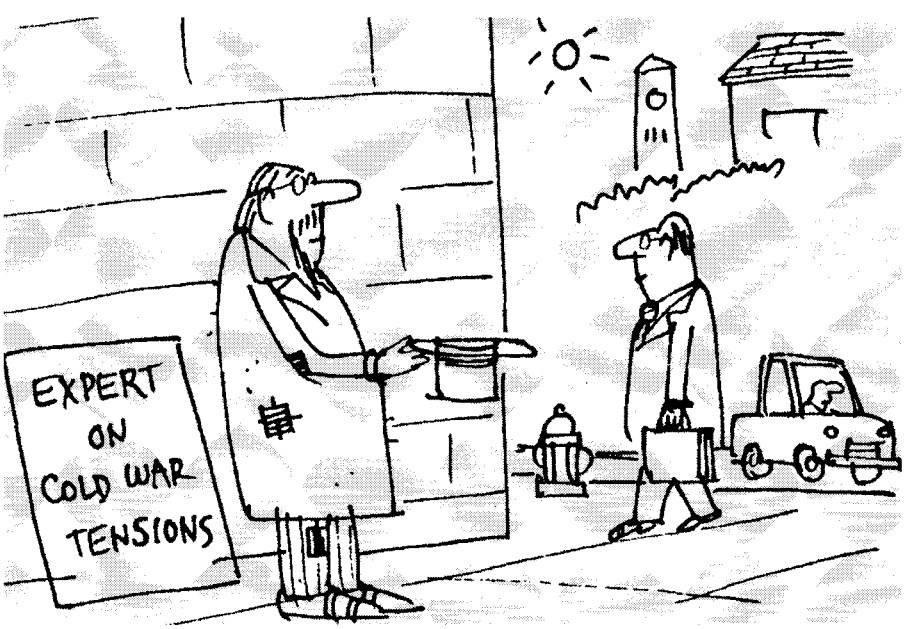
duced seven wars in the last fifty years and posed a persistent threat of catalyzing a superpower conflict, now stands on the threshold of a new era politically and religiously. Both dimensions deserve attention for they not only reveal the meaning of the new situation in the Middle East, they also reflect larger truths about world politics in the post-cold war age.

The Israeli-PLO agreement is a product of the changing structure of Middle East politics. During the cold war it was virtually impossible to separate the politics of the region from the superpower competition. Both the Soviet Union and the United States regarded the Middle East as strategically central to their roles in the international system. Neither superpower would allow the other to become the sole arbiter of power and politics in the region. At the same time, both of them recognized that a direct confrontation could escalate beyond their control. The result was an intricate pattern of competition and restraint; each superpower had allies in the region, but each had interests that were broader and different from those of its local partner. To be sure, the superpowers could be correctly indicted for fueling the regional conflict through arms transfers, but they also contained the aspirations of key states, and, at times, sought (less successfully) to push local parties toward some resolution of fundamental differences.

The effect of the interpenetration of superpower and regional politics was to preclude major initiatives by local actors. There were exceptions: Sadat consciously initiated war with Israel in 1973 in order to bring the United States more directly into the Middle East conflict; he then made his dramatic journey to Jerusalem, initiating the process that led to the Camp David accords. Even these bold moves, however, were designed to catalyze action by others. Regional choices were clearly seen as subordinate to the policies of external actors.

The collapse of the cold war fundamentally altered this pattern of regional-global relations. The Israeli-PLO negotiations were the product of choices made by parties of the Middle East. Both found themselves in a new situation. The Israelis had reason to be concerned that, after the Gulf War, the United States seemed principally focused on domestic issues, determined to trim foreign commitments, even foreign assistance to Israel. The PLO had lost its superpower patron with the demise of the cold war and had lost regional support by its policy in the Gulf War. Expecting less from external sources, both Israel and the PLO had reason to review their status and interests in the region. The product of this rethinking was the Declaration of Principles in which each party made fundamental choices to reverse the pattern of five decades of conflict. The effect of the declaration was to recast Middle East politics. The Israeli political leadership, in the face of significant opposition, struck a new balance in the traditional Israeli calculus of how much territory is needed for Israeli security. Mr. Arafat, long dependent on key Arab states, moved without consulting them, established diplomatic ties with Israel, and sought to recapture political momentum from the Palestinian leadership in the West Bank. The United States, recognized by all as the dominant external force in the region, played the modest role of legitimizing what the regional actors had initiated. The U.S. did not claim credit for the decisive shift in the Middle East, and Mr. Clinton seemed quite content to preside over the work of others. The broader issue at stake here is whether this limited conception of U.S. leadership could be effective in other regional conflicts. The complexity of Bosnia and the dangers of nuclear proliferation on the Korean peninsula seem to require more.

If the political map of the Middle East was changed by the Declaration of Principles, religious relationships were reshaped in equally profound terms by the Fundamental Agreement between Israel and the Vatican. The significance of the agreement goes well beyond the juridical language of its fifteen articles. The relationship of the Catholic church to Judaism, and to its contemporary expression in the secular state of Israel, has been a mix of substantive religious principles and diplomatic (or political) reality. In his very useful summary of Vatican-Israeli relations (*America*, November 6, 1993), the Reverend Thomas Stransky reminds us that Pius XI's refusal to support the Zionist movement was expressed in terms of theological ideas. Much of the theology invoked by Pius XI was fundamentally recast in Vatican II's *Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*. Since the council, the religious dialogue between Catholics and Jews has progressed substantially. The diplomatic dimension was virtually frozen. Some of the commentary from Jewish and Catholic sources about the Fundamental Agreement has given scant recognition to the issues which blocked any accord. The Vatican case was always open to reasonable dispute, but it did include issues about the fate of the



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Palestinians, the criteria for a just settlement of conflicting political claims, and the significance of Jerusalem. The fact that at least some of these issues are precisely the topics addressed in the Declaration of Principles seems not irrelevant to the new turn in Jewish-Catholic relations.

Stransky's article, written before the Fundamental Agreement was signed, identifies the primary motive of the Holy See's policy as the religious relationship to Judaism, "not pragmatic adjustment to a world of religious pluralism or a *realpolitik* in the community of nations." I believe it is correct to ground Vatican policy in religious themes, but I would give a larger role to diplomatic concerns. The Holy See's long interest in the Middle East and its concern to be an actor in the future dialogue about the region is a real moving force in present policy.

This is not surprising, and it is quite relevant to a broader theme. In a multiplicity of post-cold war conflicts, religion is intrinsically tied to politics. The ability to address existing conflicts, and others likely to arise, will require a mix of religious and political diplomacy that is at present in short supply. Religion cannot be considered an external matter to much of contemporary diplomacy. The significance of the Fundamental Agreement, and the way it complements the Declaration of Principles, is that it may provide a successful model for the future of the new order of states and nations. □

OF SEVERAL MINDS Abigail McCarthy

THAT'S MS. TO YOU, BUB

ON THE ADVICE OF GRANDMOTHER & MISS MANNERS

Toward the end of last year a provocative column appeared in the *Washington Post*. Its topic was hardly earth-shaking but it elicited a veritable blizzard of response—letters to the editor, letters to the columnist coming "from Hawaii to the Virgin Islands," even comment in other columns. The original column by William Raspberry expressed his annoyance at strangers who presumed to call him by his first name.

The exchange his column precipitated is evidence of the difficulty we experience in living amicably together in this last part of the twentieth century. In a later column, Mr. Raspberry wrote, "To judge from the mail, there are only two kinds of people in America: those who go around calling strangers and other non-intimates by their first names and those who resent it" (*Washington Post*, December 20, 1993).

If this dichotomy exists, as Mr. Raspberry half-humorously suggests, I think it is because the threads of the net of custom which hold any society together have, in ours, become frayed and broken. In trying to understand what has happened I have cast my mind back to the customs of the tight little community into which I was born. First names there were reserved for family, close intimates, and the contemporaries of the young. This rule held even though, small as the community was, there existed within it a complicated skein of social relationships.

Except for a very few close friends, my grandmother addressed her frequent callers as "Mrs. Hawley" or "Mrs. Lynch." This measure of reserve and respect extended to the laundress who came on Mondays, French-Canadian Mrs. Leveille, and to the couple who came to stoke the coal stoves and light the kitchen fire on cold winter mornings, Dutch-born Mr. and Mrs. Stuven. If any of these had first names we children never knew them. This respect was reciprocated by everyone in town, including the family doctor and the parish priest. (It is possible that they did not even know what grandmother's first name was.)

Teachers in our town were called "Miss," as was the town librarian. So were nurses. All younger people addressed their elders as "Mr." or "Mrs." There were, however, even in those days, a few confrontational types who violated the unwritten rules but these were regarded as people for whom, in my grandmother's words, you "made allowances." There were also a few town characters whom everyone called by their first names. Behind these customs there were undoubtedly generations of subtle adjustments—between people from different cultures, between generations, between the demands of democratic living and respect for differences of station.

These adjustments were still going on in my mother's generation. All her friends were called by their first names—but not mere acquaintances. We children were still to address adults with respect but our mother's closest friends became honorary aunts—"Aunt Verne" and "Aunt Belle," for example. Our real aunts were always addressed by title except for the two youngest who were "Abbie" and "Mamie," respectively. Therein lay a gray area. It was not clear when young people graduated into adulthood and the right to titles, because our community had no rites of passage like the coming-out parties of more sophisticated communities. Getting a job, going to work, made the difference in some cases. But there seemed to be a consensus that if young women, even if assistant postmistress or a teller in a bank, were still called by their first names they were still considered eligible for marriage.

These complexities and adjustments have all but disappeared in our society, as Mr. Raspberry's correspondence suggests. The reasons given for the ubiquitous first-naming are various. There are those who defend it as being more friendly. Others think it is flattering. Judith Martin, my friend who writes a syndicated etiquette column under the name "Miss Manners," dubs both these explanations "patently phony." These people should be made to understand, she says, that friendship is a privilege to be conferred. To presume to it is demeaning.

Most of those who wrote to columnist Raspberry or his editor expressed their annoyance at being first-named by salespersons, especially those who invaded their privacy by what is called telemarketing. One such salesman told Raspberry that the use of first names facilitated sales.

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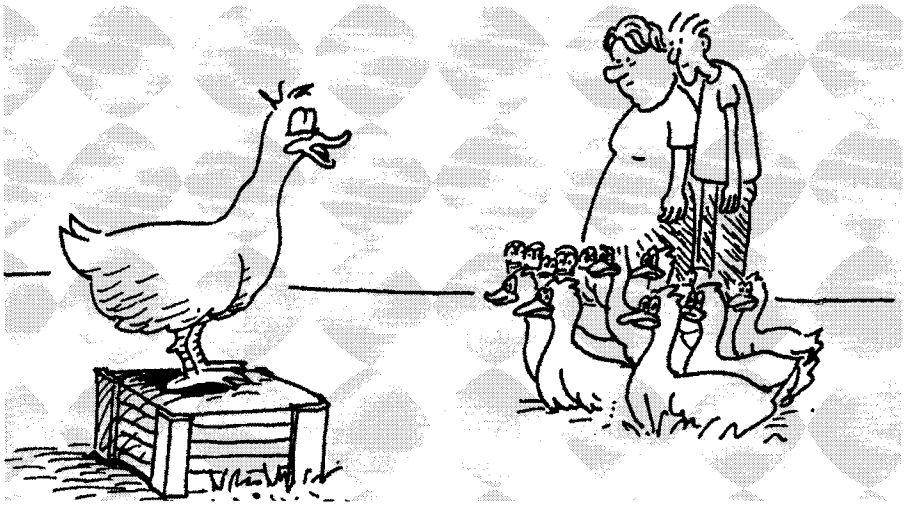
I think it is very likely that there are lonely old persons who welcome any call, no matter how the caller addresses them. Brokers especially seem to find the approach successful with such people. This only underlines the fact that this use of first names is a commercial ploy and a demeaning one.

Brassiness has long been ascribed to salespersons—unfortunately for those who are perfectly nice. For the brassy, one can, in my grandmother's terms, "make allowances." But what is one to make of the prevalence of first-naming in doctors' offices, in hospitals, and nursing homes? This was a second concern of those responding to Mr. Raspberry's column. "He calls himself Doctor__, but he and all his staff call me by my first name," wrote one woman. "Your column reminded me that this kind of put-down can only continue for me as long as I allow it."

Judith "Miss Manners" Martin would emphatically agree with her. This practice in medical offices is seriously demeaning and should not be tolerated. I must admit that I, in the past, have countered rather obliquely by answering the doctor's opening, "Well, how are we today, Abigail?" with "Just fine, John," or "Mark," or whatever his name might be. This has usually resulted in a retreat to "Mrs. McCarthy" the next time round, or the acceptance of the use of both first names. (I was foiled twice, however—once by a doctor with such a strange first name that I was sure it was never used; another by a cheerful, thick-skinned fellow who, on first sight, called me "Abbie" and continued to do so until he went off to accept a medical chair somewhere in Texas.)

Of my remedy, Ms. Martin did not completely approve. "There is nothing wrong," she reminded me firmly, "in saying 'I prefer to be called Mrs. So-and-So.' It is an unequal relationship in which he has assumed superiority." This medical custom obviously has its roots in the exaggerated veneration in which doctors long were held in our society. They were seen as quasi-godlike creatures privy to the secrets of life and death. Many doctors, particularly those of the last generation, accepted this view of themselves. Hence, the practice of calling patients, of whatever age or status, by first names.



"Mallards, ladies and gentlemen..."

There may be an even darker explanation. A retired psychiatrist ventured the opinion that it was a practice based in the physician's desire to distance himself from the patient as a person—to "objectify" him or her as an illness or complaint and thus to avoid a relationship with which the physician is not prepared, by either training or inclination, to deal. This shows up in its most extreme form in teaching hospitals where patients are referred to as "the gallbladder in room 13" or "the cardiac in number 6."

That the physician's habit of address should be copied by the staff is understandable but sometimes motivation of staff is more complex. It contains elements of "I'm as good as you are" and ageism. There is a dramatic instance of how hard it is to confront this in Doris Grumbach's *Coming into the End Zone*, the memoir of her seventieth year.

As I mulled over the first-name phenomenon I realized that I was puzzled by a final concern. Why, in the last few years, have my priest and professional friends, even my old college friends—all of whom boast honorifics on their own return labels—decided to rob me of *any* when they address letters to me? Does it go back to the uneasy practice of my mother's generation—the condemning of the working woman to perpetual maidenhood? But wouldn't that call for "Miss"? Whatever their reason, I would like to remind them that not so long ago feminists waged a struggle to have an honorific adopted to bridge the gap. It's a very useful honorific—so call me Ms., please! □

OF SEVERAL MINDS David R. Carlin, Jr.

DATE RAPE FALLACIES

CAN THERE BE PURELY VOLUNTARY ACTS?

Like many others, I have been puzzled by the theory and practice of date rape. When I first heard mention of date rape a few years back, I was a bit surprised that such a phenomenon had become a major problem. But my surprise quickly wore off as I reflected that this was the sort of thing that was bound to happen, given society's widespread moral subjectivism and consequently permissive sexual code.

But then I was surprised again when I read about astonishingly high rates of date

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rape on college campuses. In some places 25 to 50 percent of all undergraduate females had been victims of date rape. Now I was willing to believe (in fact I was eager to believe) that young men in college were not as gentlemanly as they were back in the days when I was alive. Yet I found it hard to believe they had become quite that bad.

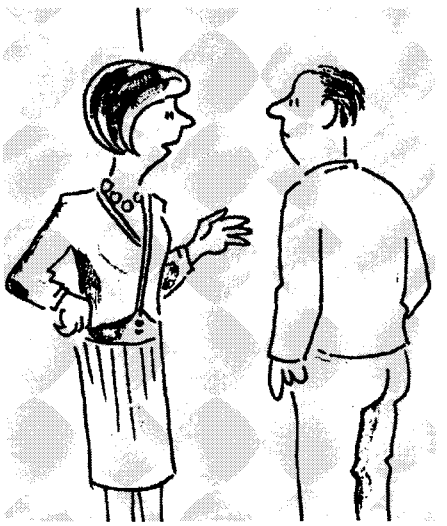
My credulity was strained even more when I read the explanations for these high numbers given by critics of date rape research. According to the critics, these astonishing figures are a function not of a new kind of behavior among college men but of a new definition of rape among researchers. While "rape" used to mean coerced, nonconsensual sex, it now also includes having sex when you'd really rather not but you've been talked into it by a partner who has utilized any of a large number of items in the seducer's classical bag of tricks, e.g., flattery, promises, arguments, appeals to pity, reminders of past promises, threats to break off the relationship, etc. In other words, rape occurs even when consent is given, provided this consent is influenced by external pressure and is not simply the result of internal desire.

I found it difficult to believe that academic researchers could be as intellectually dishonest as the critics alleged. I suspected these critics were antifeminist right-wingers who were making it all up.

But of course it really isn't a matter of dishonesty; rather it's a matter of redefinition. The date-rape theorists are saying: "Hitherto the world has had an inadequate conception of rape, for that conception has not taken into consideration the full range of diminished consent that can be involved in a sexual act. Nor has it recognized that these lesser forms of involuntariness differ in degree only, not in kind, from the more extreme form involved in the classical conception of rape."

The theorists then note that the classical definition of rape was created by men, that is, by people who are inevitably insensitive to the many varieties of sexual involuntariness that may be experienced by women. By contrast, the new expanded and improved definition is created by women. The old definition defined the crime from the point of view of the perpetrator, the new from the point of view of the victim.

When I had got this far in my reflections I had a moment of illumination. I saw the point, and I thought the point was valid—even though I continue to be troubled by the use of the word "rape" to cover the whole range of events. For no matter how true the new feminist analysis might be, there still remains a world of difference between a smooth talker on the one hand and a man holding a knife to your throat on the other. Calling them both rapists may be a fine way of highlighting the malignity of the former, but it is also a way of trivializing the criminality of the latter. Nonetheless, I am willing to grant



"Before we go on vacation, I think we should exchange hidden agendas."

that the date-rape theorists have made an important discovery.

But once we start noting degrees of involuntariness, where do we stop? When is consent to a sexual act fully voluntary? For that matter, when is consent to any act fully voluntary? How many moments per day do you do purely and simply what you want to do—not what your spouse would like you to do, or your children, or your boss, or your co-workers, or the police officer, or the state legislature? Not many moments, I'd guess. Of course when we comply with the wishes of these others, we are often complying more or less with our own wishes. Our actions in these cases have a double source: internal inclination plus external pressure. But we need both; for when the latter is absent, the former is usually not strong enough to compel us to action.

I won't say there is no such thing as a purely 100-percent voluntary action, just as I won't say there is no such thing as a purely 100-percent altruistic action. If such deeds exist, they are the rarest things in the world. Yet to recognize that altruism is almost always alloyed with egoism is not to deny that there are altruistic acts and persons; nor is it to deny that there are fundamental differences between Mother Teresa and Stalin. Similarly, to recognize that voluntariness is almost always mixed with elements of involuntariness is not to deny that there is a real and extremely important distinction between voluntary and involuntary actions. Meeting one's contractual obligations may contain elements of the involuntary, but it is still radically different from being a slave or a prisoner.

The ideal of the purely voluntary sex act is part and parcel of the contemporary liberal belief that actions are morally sound only when they arise from the free choice of autonomous individuals. According to this view, if I allow others to impose their values or preferences upon me, I am not truly autonomous; my choices are not really my choices; hence my actions are morally defective.

But this quest for autonomy is a will o' the wisp, for human beings are essentially incapable of being purely autonomous. Humans are social beings all the way down; and to be a member of society is to be part of a system of mutual controls; hence it is to be something less than fully autonomous. At bottom, then, the desire for autonomy is the desire to live outside of society. As Aristotle said a long time ago, the one who lives outside society is either below human nature or above it, either a beast or a god.

So let's have one-and-a-half rousing cheers for the feminists exploring the many degrees of involuntariness involved in sex. But to the degree they get their effort mixed up with the impossible ideal of perfect autonomy and pure voluntariness, they are in grave danger of giving their important work the aspect of absurdity. □

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GIVING UP THE GIFT

ONE WOMAN'S ABORTION DECISION

MADELEIN GRAY

Until I crashed against my limitations, I seemed to be the perfect Catholic mother. I was known as an active parishioner and eucharistic minister who had borne three children despite a serious chronic illness. I cherished them as signs of grace and kept these lively children at the center of my life. Though I often felt drained, I welcomed the possibility of a fourth child some day.

When I actually became pregnant again, an astonishingly intense depression, along with further deterioration of my health, led to an abortion. Nearly three years later, I am still appalled by what I have done. I still mourn my baby and my former idea of who I was. My grief is compounded by my estrangement from my church.

I do not wish to grieve silently any longer, partly because I realize that I have many co-mourners. It is horrifying to realize that a million-and-a-half uniquely painful stories are played out each year in the United States. But the real women behind the statistics rarely tell their stories. In the abortion debate, this public battle about the most personal of matters, the voices left unheard, the stories lost among the placards and drowned out by simplistic slogans are those of the very women who have felt desperate enough to seek abortion.

If we are Catholic, we are afraid of being shamed and hurt even more than we already are. We fear we would be accused of being selfish and thoughtless. Wounded as we are, we remain silent, alone, unreconciled.

I am intensely aware of the precious gift a baby is. I have Crohn's disease, which causes chronic inflammation and ulceration of the digestive tract. The illness flares without pattern or warning, sometimes leaving me gravely ill, feverish, and weak. During each of my pregnancies I had to take potent steroid medications to restore my health and prayed that my baby would be all right.

I bled early during my first pregnancy, and my doctor dimly hinted that the fetus might no longer be alive and ordered an ultrasound examination. At eight weeks' gestation we were amazed to see a lima bean-sized creature exuberantly flipping through the amniotic fluid, her little heart rapidly beating. She is now a tall, talented, and especially kind nine-year-old.

From the day I brought home my third baby, my middle child had a rough time, obviously feeling displaced too early. I began to feel buried under the chaos of our lives, as well as financial hardship and the precarious state of my health. With three children I was at my limit, but, because of my health problems, birth control pills were not an option for me. My husband and I could not bring ourselves to choose steriliza-

MADELEIN GRAY *is the pseudonym of a free-lance writer who lives in Wisconsin.*

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tion, so we were left with less reliable methods of contraception.

For nearly three years now I have lived with the ghost of a child. Over and over again I speculate how the story might have been written otherwise, about what might have brought this child to light. I replay in my mind the sequence of events.

December 1990—I am shocked to find out I am pregnant for the fourth time. In a romantic moment during a "safe" time of the month we had let our better judgment lapse. It was human failure, pure and simple.

I am even more shocked by my reaction. I fall into a deep depression. It is so hard to face reality that I literally spend days in bed under a heap of blankets, coming out from under them only when absolutely necessary. Life was such a precarious balance already. How can we handle a fourth child?

I have the awful feeling that I am losing my three children. They are still so young—ages six, three, and one. They need a mother who is fully present, happy, and relaxed. I do not have the energy and spirit to raise four young children. The option of abortion enters my mind. The thought horrifies me, but I feel backed into a corner.

My physician tells me that if I carry on with the pregnancy I will have to discontinue one of my medications. It has taken me years of gradually increasing doses of this medicine to overcome an allergy to it, and, so far, it has saved me from major surgery.

My husband worries about my getting very sick and not being there for him or the children. He has visions of himself as a single father of four children. Thinking over the state of my health, he feels sure that I need to end this pregnancy.

December 25, 1990—At Midnight Mass I pray as fervently as I can. I know that if anything can convert me, this magical liturgy, the celebration of the unlikely infant, should do it. Could we make room in our crowded lives, could I make room in my diseased and aging body for this infant?

Being Catholic, I feel alienated from my church when I most need it. At a time when I am very vulnerable, I cannot take the risk of seeking help from anyone who would condemn me simply for considering abortion or who might not keep my experience confidential. So I avoid any counselor with a pro-life bias. With the help of a women's health center, I find a counselor who will express no point of view. But the counseling seems superficial. Since I am obviously not happy to be pregnant, she concludes—too easily—that I must want an abortion.

I take my plight directly to God through prayer. I receive the answer that, having borne three children already, I know the gift of a baby. But I can give back the gift if the burden is too great, and it will be taken back into the universe. The greatest punishment I will receive is that which I am already suffering—the knowledge that I will never know this child.

This child, already built to outlast me, will never see the light of day, never be loved by its sisters and brother, will never learn or marry or have children, never grow old.

My husband makes an appointment for me at a "women's clinic" in a large city a hundred miles away. I tell the counselor there that I will only terminate this pregnancy if I can do it very early, before the baby takes form, before there is a heartbeat. But I am informed that they will not do abortions before eight weeks of pregnancy; otherwise it cannot be done properly.

I am in the most hellish situation I can imagine. I carry the pregnancy for three weeks more so the embryo can grow large enough to be destroyed.

During those weeks I develop an odd relationship with this incipient baby. Even though an abortion is scheduled, I cannot imagine drinking alcohol during Christmas and New Year's festivities while I am pregnant.

January 7, 1991—My child's last night. I cry as I try to drift off to sleep. I say good-by to the little creature and tell the child I love it. I dream that I go out to a field and release the being. I see it flutter out of me and into the sky like a butterfly.

January 8, 1991—It's a cold, dark, two-hour ride before dawn to the clinic. I remember last night's dream, which was my true good-by. Now I steel myself for hard reality. No butterflies and meadows now. This being will be vacuumed through a tube and put out with the trash.

I'm amazed at how full the waiting room is. And it's like this every day. I am surprised at how casual it all is. We could be waiting for teeth cleaning. Women and their companions are reading magazines; a couple of teen-age girls smirk and kid around.

I am run through a succession of steps in this efficient system: blood test, viewing of a video, a quick physical exam, a perfunctory chat with a counselor who sends us to the financial officer. They want payment in advance, which we pay with Mastercard, which seems obscene. I am offered and gratefully accept a Valium.

Because of the medications I take for my illness, I am given a cortisone shot and told to wait in the recovery room for a half hour while it takes effect. I watch one woman after another come out of the procedure rooms in street clothes, shoes in hand. It all looks reassuringly routine. But even in my relaxed Valium-induced state unbid thoughts pop into my head, voices which shout, "You can still change your mind! Run for it!"

But I suppress those voices. I cannot get through this with doubts. And I know that if I bolt, I'll be talked back into returning. It would only be worse.

The nurse finally calls for me. She instructs me to talk so that it won't hurt so much. She asks about our two-hour drive there. How were the roads? I chatter my way through the four-minute procedure, blabbering frantically about the weather and the condition of the interstate, as I try to ward off the intense sensations.

I am relieved to be back in the recovery room. The nurses are very kind. They flit about taking orders for tea, coffee, and toast from each of us. They chat with one of the women,

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who says she'll be right back at work tonight on the graveyard shift. Their mundane, matter-of-fact manner is comforting, and I am grateful to these nurses, who seem to know just what we need.

My chair happens to face the hall by the procedure rooms. The nurse periodically walks out of one of them with the glass receptacles used in the procedure. I see them as hard lifeless wombs into which we have delivered our children.

The recovery room is lined with recliner chairs all around the walls. Unlike the waiting room, this one is silent. I know that I will forever see the pained faces of that quiet circle of women.

After my half-hour of recovery, I gratefully escape. I cry in the parking lot, and then we go to lunch.

Back at home, I sleep well for the first time in several weeks. Then I fall into a period of despair. I stop seeing friends. I have told none of them what I've done and now feel that I live in a different universe from those good mothers. I have a few really bad nights where I consider, with enough vividness to frighten me, the idea of jumping off a bridge into the river.

When I am not in despair, I feel nothing. The easy eradication of an incipient person makes my own life, as well as my children's, seem fragile and meaningless. We could so easily not be here, have never existed. One piece of the mind of God has evaporated and become lost in the universe.

August 19, 1991—My due date. I have a private burial ceremony in the back yard for the child whose name is known by no one but me. Under a lilac bush I bury the only concrete evidence that this being existed—the blue-tipped plastic stick, indicating a positive result, from my home pregnancy test. I lay a withered carnation on the ground.

I know that I have passed by any greatness of spirit. Had I been Mary, Jesus would never have been born.

I remain depressed through autumn and winter.

April 1992—I see an article in our diocesan newspaper about postabortion counseling. A toll-free number is listed for those in need of help. It takes me a week to work up the nerve to call. A kind-sounding woman refers me to a diocesan office. Since I cannot summon the confidence to phone them, I write a letter asking who in my city could help me.

I immediately receive a reply, a wonderfully warm letter from a nun, along with some brochures written by someone who obviously understands exactly how I feel. Names are provided of three priests in my area with training in Project Rachel, the church's postabortion counseling program.

Despite the promise of reconciliation which is offered in the brochure, I feel too fragile to contact any of these priests. I need my church too much to risk being hurt more deeply than I already am.

July 1992—I contact a minister of the United Church of Christ, whose name was also given me by Project Rachel. She invites me to her home on a sunny summer afternoon. There, over coffee at her dining room table, she listens to my story. I cry lots, telling her that I don't know how I'll get beyond the pain. She brings me a box of Kleenex and recounts the story of Jacob, how he wrestled with the angel and received his new name, Israel, but walked with a limp the rest of his life.

She tells me I am not alone, that she had counseled a militant prolifer who, when her own teen-age daughter became pregnant, obtained an abortion for her.

Though I am grateful for this accepting woman, this minister who shares coffee and Kleenex, I remain troubled by the fact that I am actually excommunicated from the church. According to church law, I am digging myself in a continually deeper hole toward hell by continuing to participate in the Eucharist. But without God, without my community, I would die spiritually.

I think of the many Catholic women like me who must be suffering alone and cannot summon the courage to reconcile within the church.

Autumn 1992—My family and I spend this season living in a college community far from home, in the countryside. In this pastoral setting, in this leave of absence from home and routine, strong bonds are forged among our group of new friends. My depression begins to lift. I realize I am smiling and laughing more than I have in years.

I walk miles each day. One sunny afternoon on a country walk under the wide October sky, I can palpably feel redemption.

Two months later, at the end of my last day at that place, as the red sun touches the winter landscape like an eye shutting peacefully on a season of grace, I feel God's hand touch the top of my head.

I return home knowing that God forgave me long ago. I begin to forgive myself. But I crave the kind of reconciliation that we as flesh and blood creatures most understand, to be touched and forgiven by another human being. That is what I need to be set free.

I have begun talking to a counselor. She happens to be an active Catholic, but she does not know of any priest in my city whom she would trust to listen to me with compassion. If, indeed, there are Catholic clergy who are approachable, they are well hidden.

I do not ask the church to change its position on abortion. I am not trying to justify my action or exonerate myself. But I do ask the church for a more open invitation to counseling and reconciliation, as well as reassurance to women that they will not be shamed or condemned. Had I not feared harsh judgment, I might have sought a counselor who might have helped me to see how I could bear this baby.

I also ask for understanding. My choice was not simple: it was not made out of disregard for life but because of the desire to protect my family. No one loved that incipient child more than I did.

I ask for the type of compassion and friendship that Jesus offered Mary Magdalene. □

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ARIAS & GIGGLES

'PHILADELPHIA' & 'FATHER'

Philadelphia deals with two subjects, one explicitly, the other implicitly, and neither one of them is AIDS. Each theme has its own climax, one harrowingly achieved, the other sadly fumbled. Both themes involve a change of perception experienced by the character Denzel Washington plays. So the actor got it right in the statement that was quoted in the *New York Times* (January 16, 1994), "This is not a movie about AIDS, really. It's an emotional self-examination." And he certainly gets everything right on screen with a performance of admirable economy and terse humor that nicely interacts with Tom Hanks's piquant blend of feyness and lucidity.

The overt theme is homophobia. Homophobia it is that prompts a prestigious law firm's senior partner (Jason Robards) to engineer the firing of his protégé (Hanks) when he learns that the brilliant young attorney has AIDS. Hanks counters with a wrongful termination suit and, his case rejected by nine other lawyers, winds up with an intelligent ambulance chaser played by Washington. (The ACLU wouldn't take this case on? Don't ask. The script won't tell.) In court, Washington exposes the bigotry that motivated the firing, but out of court he has to come to terms with his own homophobia.

The change in Washington is plausibly dramatized but we are never in any doubt that it will happen, for the character he plays is a decent chap quite ready to drop his prejudices once he works with a homosexual side by side. Much more interesting, potentially fascinating in fact, are the murky emotions underlying Robards's revulsion. Scriptwriter Ron Nyswaner is really onto something here as he shows that this elderly macho man once took such fatherly pride in the young lawyer's acumen that during the showdown in court he can still feel a glow of pleasure at hearing Hanks, on the witness stand, describe Robards as a demigod of the profession. Although Robards may ostensibly fear AIDS being brought into his office, what really burns him is that he thought he knew Hanks well, but the visible ravages of the disease prove that he didn't. It is this unintended psychological rebuff that has aroused the old man's ire and his act of injustice. Nyswaner has written a climactic courtroom duel for Robards and Washington that is meant to lay bare the former's resentment. But director Jonathan Demme bungles the scene by putting his camera, so to speak, inside Hanks's head and having the cross-examination heard through the distorting echo chamber of the AIDS victim's failing hearing and seen through the blur of his failing vision. What we get is a swirling, subjectively photographed death agony instead of what the theme of homophobia really calls for: a lucid revelation of the roots of fear and hatred.

But then there is that other, implicit theme of *Philadelphia*: the preciousness of life made more precious under the shadow of the wingspan of death. Here Demme's direction triumphs in the scene in which Washington tries to spend one evening in Hanks's apartment coaching his client for his upcoming testimony in court. In the background, a stereo is playing an aria from *Andrea Chenier* sung by Maria Callas. Washington's diligent questions are all about the past and the future, but Hanks can by now respond only to the fleeting beauty of the *now* as he hears it in the passion of the diva's voice. He rises, an IV needle still in his arm, and dances, floats really, in the embrace of the music. The camera hovers with him, but this movement is intercut with anchored shots of Washington transfixed by compassion and hushed horror. In his client and friend, Washington now sees not just the devastation of AIDS, not only the pathos of one man dying too soon, but the innate tragedy of all mortality: the ascending spirit flailing in its crumbling shell. Once Hanks subsides, Washington can only excuse himself, hurry home, and embrace his wife and child. It's a magnificent scene in an often gripping but unfulfilled movie.

An odd, unsettling thing happens in the first trial scene of *In the Name of the Father*. Sitting in the dock and hearing themselves anathematized by the prosecutor for the I.R.A. bombing of a pub in Guilford, England, several of the defendants start to giggle. This is perfectly understandable, for the gigglers are children. One is a fifteen-year-old boy, another a girl of seventeen. The only habitual criminal

John Nixon, Jr.

Four Feet around the Square

About as thin as the sheet music
They didn't have, my teen-aged uncle
And Plussy, only slightly fatter
And black as every missing rag-
Time note, buckdanced all up and down
The pre-jazz sidewalks in First World
War Batesville, Mississippi. What
A clatter on the concrete. What
A pair of innovators: pale
Boy dancing with his shadow, dark
Boy dancing with his ghost—the two
Happily integrating show
Business decades before Broadway
Reactionaries dared to dream
Of any step so radical.

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on trial—the protagonist, twentyish Gerry Conlon—has been a petty thief and a one-time burglar. None of them has ever been remotely involved with terrorism, but they're hearing themselves described as monsters of ultimate evil. They know perfectly well they're in a jam, yet the accusations are so outlandish that they have to choke back their laughter.

Also on trial are senior members of the Conlon clan—Gerry's father and aunt—and the adults aren't laughing one bit. They know exactly what's up. It's the early seventies: the I.R.A. has been devastating London with bombs, and the public is crying out for vengeance. Because of this pressure, the government investigators have rigged a case by planting false evidence and suppressing facts. The frame-up works, the verdict is guilty, and the sentence is so severe that Gerry will be approaching early middle age before he and his relatives are vindicated. The Conlons have done nothing worse than be in the wrong place at the wrong time, but they're in for it.

This is a movie about monstrous injustice but its creators, writer-producer Terry George and writer-director Jim Sheridan, aren't content with showing the horror done to the defendants. They also dramatize how injustice affects everybody who comes into contact with it. When the verdict is read, the girl defendant is carried off in hysterics but one of the policewomen attending her also collapses. A warden tries to be decent to the imprisoned father but a real terrorist (who's in the same prison with the innocent man) torches the officer because he can regard him only as a tool of oppression. Sheridan even insists that we see how the perpetrators of injustice suffer. As the chief investigator perjures himself on the stand, the director gives us a close-up of his lying mouth but then pulls the camera up to his suffering eyes. This man's own corruption is eating away at him. No facile equivalence is committed here, but Sheridan's blazingly humane point is that injustice is a plague and contamination that respects neither innocence nor guilt.

Sheridan has played so fast and loose with the facts of the Guilford case that the movie is being decried in England as the Celtic *J.F.K.* Two points should be made about this comparison:

First: whatever its merits as sheer filmmaking (dim, in my minority view), *J.F.K.* employs its fictionalizing to make a

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case (Kennedy murdered by the Pentagon) that is coming to seem more tenuous, not to say preposterous, as time and assassination probes march on. But the central fact of the Guilford case—that the Conlons were framed—is not now in any serious doubt, no matter what fictionalizing Sheridan employs to present it.

Second: one of the main fictionalized devices—showing Gerry and his father imprisoned in the same cell—doesn't develop the legal aspect of the case at all but helps focus attention on the emotional problems of Gerry Conlon.

But *In the Name of the Father* isn't agitprop. For all its gritty realism and headlong tempo, it's a poetic exploration of the nature of authority. The title itself is double-edged. It doesn't refer only to Gerry's relationship with his father but to what is done in the name of the state. More than ever, the state presents itself as an ambiguous parent to each of us—succoring, regulating, punishing. (President Bill Clinton's State of the Union address promises no diminishment of this.) In the name of the paternal state the chief investigator suppresses the truth and ruins the lives of the innocent. On the personal level, the goodness of the elder Conlon, as filtered through his meek, pious temperament, infuriates his son and spurs him on to greater delinquencies. Yet his underlying love for his father will finally give Gerry the tenacity to prove the family blameless. *In the Name of the Father* is a hate/love poem to parental authority.

Jim Sheridan proved he was a great director of intimate drama in *My Left Foot*. Here, he's wonderful again with his actors but also proves himself a remarkable action director.

There is no crack in Pete Postlethwaite's characterization of the senior Conlon that shows you the actor within plugging away. I got the feeling that if I called Postlethwaite up at four in the morning, he would answer me in Conlon's gentle voice and communicate all of the man's saintliness right over the phone.

I'm sick and tired of using this column as a camouflaged love letter to Emma Thompson (who plays Gerry's lawyer), so let me note only that in her outburst in court during the climactic trial, Thompson's high dudgeon is done in her highest style, and that's as high as style or dudgeon gets.

As for Daniel Day-Lewis, he's beginning to scare me. I've long known that he combines the versatility of a Guinness and—when needed—the sex appeal of Mick Jagger; that his talent leaps over boundaries of class and age. Who else could believably play both the sixty-year-old Newland Archer fastidiously walking away from love at the end of *The Age of Innocence* and the twenty-year-old Gerry Conlon, for whom Belfast rioting is rock 'n' roll? All that's merely a matter of acting genius. But now, gazing at a still from *In the Name of the Father*, I confirm what I was struck by while watching the movie: Day-Lewis has changed the shape of his chin for this role. Make-up? Plastic surgery? Black Magic? I'm quite ready to concede that Day-Lewis is the greatest film actor under forty, but I'm also beginning to suspect that he has sold his soul to the devil. If that is the case, I will no longer be able to praise his performances in a Catholic magazine.

RICHARD ALLEVA

MEDIA

TAKE MY WIFE—PLEASE

GOOD (DEEDS) TO THE LAST DROP

If you check out the November 22, 1993, issue of *People*, you may have caught, on the recto page of the centerfold, a rather enigmatic ad for Maxwell House Coffee. It's a photo of fifty people standing on a spiral staircase in a rough S shape, all holding candles and smiling. And the legend reads, "With Real Heroes like These, We Can Light up the Country." The Maxwell House logo, an overturned cup with "Good to the Last Drop," is tucked into the bottom of the page.

Oh, yeah. The woman at the lower crook of the S, the one in the beige jacket, is my wife, Celeste. Let me tell you how she wound up standing there in D.C. on that October Sunday.

About two years ago, she read in the morning paper about a young woman who had come up from Santa Barbara to our town, Lompoc, to have her out-of-wedlock baby at her aunt's home. Next day the kid took her baby to the hospital to be checked. They found traces of cocaine in the mother and the baby, and—there was no other recourse—called the cops, who arrested the mother and put the two-day infant into foster care. Celeste was appalled: went to the jail, went to the D.A., talked to the hospital people and local doctors, *all* of whom agreed with her that this was one screwed-up way to handle things and wished there were another option.

Okay. Now being married to Celeste is sort of like being married to Joan of Arc. What she did was, she called a meeting—advertised in the local paper—of interested citizens. That turned into a task force. That turned into an organization with support from agencies like the estimable Klein Bottle, a Santa Barbara County institution dedicated to helping youth. And *that* turned into Holly House. Holly House opened last month in Lompoc. It is a fully-funded, city- and federal-supported live-in coun-

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seling and care center for addicted mothers and mothers-to-be who want to get clean and learn how to care for their kids. Celeste, having started the whole thing, now plans just to spend many hours a week playing with the Holly House children.

Enter Maxwell House. 1992 was the company's centennial, and to celebrate it, they decided that they would seek out one hundred "real heroes"—Americans who had volunteered to fill a need in their communities and had made a difference for good. The first "Real Heroes" weekend in D.C. was, apparently, so successful, cordial, and inspiriting that the Maxwell House folks decided to continue it, selected fifty heroes for 1993 from—according to them—five thousand nominations. It is their way, as they say, of paying the country back for the century of support Americans have given their product. So somebody (it was our dear friend Catanna Donovan) nominated Celeste for the award, unbeknownst to us. Maxwell House called, interviewed Celeste, and in mid-October we flew, at their expense, to D.C. for a weekend of—well, I gotta tell you, and you know I'm not especially optimistic in my reading of life—hopefulness.

Coffee, for crying out loud. If you've been reading this column, you know it's not my favorite beverage. And *advertising*: I've written my share of knee-jerk liberal stuff about the perniciousness of that craft, and in most cases the McConnell knee still, and accurately, jerks.

What's remarkable about Maxwell House, though, is that it really is—dare I say this and keep my leftist secret decoder ring?—capitalism working the way it should, in the best of all possible worlds, work. The Maxwell guys are, of course, going to get a lot of mileage, and a lot of future *People* ads, out of this. They even got Barbara Bush to present the awards at the Saturday night banquet, and Willard Scott to emcee the country/western dance Sunday night. We're talking high profile here, and we're talking *media event*—the occasion demands italics—for the whole damn weekend (video cameras were almost as ubiquitous as tour guides). Some of our more politically-fixated (and nose-out-of-joint?) buddies sneered such when we got back. "Coffee isn't even good for you," snided one pal—a vegetarian who also smokes grass every night.

"It's amazing how he managed to stay out of the limelight."

But look. Maxwell House could just as well have spent their money on something else. Instead, they chose to spend four days honoring folks like Celeste. And like Pam Edwards, who suffers from a rare form of lupus, but who runs an organization committed to helping seriously ill and handicapped children in Redondo Beach, California. And Jay Wilson, who coordinates Thanksgiving dinner for 27,000—the figure is right—every year in the Baltimore area. And Bryan Slye from Reno, born paraplegic, who is a fully-functioning and in-demand paramedic, and is truly funky and smokes as much as I do. And Gary Meistad from Houston, who owns a bar I've got to go to, and who raises money for all sorts of causes by doing Texas-style barbecues, and who insists that *no* non-Texan even begins to comprehend the meaning of "barbecue." And Keith Begley from Florida, who runs an AIDS solace project, and whose life partner is HIV-positive. And others. And others.

Good people. More than even my deep pride to be Celeste's companion on the weekend, my indelible impression is of that goodness. And of the *real* enthusiasm with which the Maxwell House folks were eager to do them the honor they had—without the slightest self-advertisement on their part—earned. "I don't think I really belong here—all these other people have done so much more." I heard a version of that sentence from virtually all the "real heroes" I talked with. They didn't think they belonged there. And some of them were ultraconservative, and some were far-Left, and some were pushy and abrasive, and some were a little self-satisfied, and some drank a little too much, and some were uptight prigs. I doubt if you could have found a single moral or political or even ethical proposition upon which those fifty could have agreed. Except, maybe, the proposition that when you see a clear wrong, *you*—that's you—get off your butt and do something to make it at least less wrong.

Not a bad beginning for the idea of a republic.

So they got their weekend and they got their awards and medallions and certificates, and they went back home to continue the stellar things that had brought them there in the first place. And Maxwell House Coffee got a lot of footage and a lot of photo-ops. Is this just exploitation?

I think of a great sentence from Nietzche's *Beyond Good and Evil*: "Cynicism is the closest approach an ignoble soul can make to honesty."

No. The fact is that the heroes honored by Maxwell House *honor* Maxwell House. That a megabuck company would go out of its way to give a pat on the back—*and thereby* increased support—to community volunteer projects around the country that almost make you believe "America" might still be a viable concept, is something extraordinary: something noteworthy.

And for Celeste, it means that by the time this sees print, she'll be playing with, and delighting in, the kids at Holly House.

FRANK McCONNELL

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Untold stories, unseen pictures

A HISTORY OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN ARTISTS FROM 1792 TO THE PRESENT
Romare Bearden and Harry Henderson
Pantheon Books, $65, 541 pp.

Wilson J. Moses

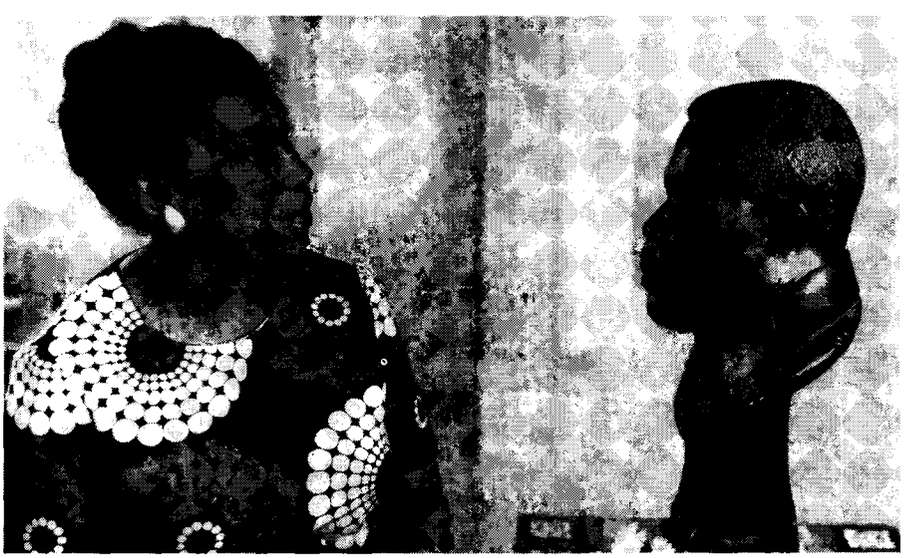
This handsome book was co-authored by the late Romare Bearden, one of the most beloved African-American artists of our time, and Harry Henderson, a gifted journalist. It is a biographical history containing, in addition to much new information on African-American artists, some rare examples of their work. There are 420 black-and-white illustrations and 61 color reproductions, including, according to the publisher's blurb, "rediscovered classics, works no longer extant, and art never before seen in this country."

Although one will not find in these pages an exhaustive history of African-American art, one will discover a rich sampler. Those knowledgeable in the field will lament the unfortunate absence of such artists as Benny Andrews and Faith Ringgold along with a number of other important figures. While no attempt has been made to present this as an encyclopedic compendium, it is an informative introduction to many of the notable African-American artists since the eighteenth century and a fascinating selection from their works.

The text contains pathos, intrigue, gossip, and scholarly puzzles that will probably be new to the average reader. Even African-American Studies specialists will discover a treasury of the rich and strange. For example, there is the controversy surrounding Joshua Johnston. Was this American portraitist, flourishing in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, of African descent? The answer to that question is a "definite maybe," or, as the authors put it, "During the last fifty years it has been increasingly accepted that Joshua Johnston was indeed an African-American." The strongest evidence that has been presented in support of Johnston's African ancestry is the discovery in 1976 of what might have been his name in the will of Mrs. Thomas Everett, who identified a portrait of herself and her children as the work of "J. Johnson." There is also a clue in a book held by one of his seated subjects, with the name "Joshu Johnson" crudely lettered on one of its pages. Why he would have misspelled his own name remains a mystery. Presumably Johnston painted portraits of many wealthy white Americans, some of whom might have left in their papers a mention of his race. The authors express the hope that perhaps an answer is yet to be discovered in some obscure archive.

Bearden and Henderson relate the heroic struggle of Edmonia Lewis, a neoclassical sculptor and Catholic convert of the late nineteenth century, observing the tremendous difficulties over which she triumphed as a black woman artist in antebellum America. She was born in Greenbush, New York, on July 14, 1848, of African and Chippewa descent, and orphaned at the age of nine. Raised by two aunts who were from her mother's tribe, she grew up speaking Chippewa, learning to weave baskets and embroider moccasins. She was sent for a short period to the New York Central College at McGrawville by her older brother, but encountered language difficulties, unaccustomed as she was to pronouncing certain English consonants. Being of an independent, rebellious nature she was soon forced to drop out, but her brother persuaded her to apply to Oberlin College. This time she had no reputation for "wildness," but she became involved in a terrible scandal, when two of her fellow students became ill and accused her of poisoning them. Before her hearing, she was abducted, beaten, and left for dead in the snow. At her hearing the black abolitionist lawyer, John Mercer Langston, argued that no medical proof of poisoning had been gathered at the time and Lewis was never brought to trial.

Ensuing difficulties with the local towns-



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people led to her being denied registration for her final term at Oberlin, and Lewis set out for Boston in 1863 where she secured an introduction to Edward A. Brackett, a sculptor known for his bust of John Brown. While at Oberlin, she had demonstrated some skills at drawing, and Brackett took her under his wing, offering her advice and encouragement. Her brother rented a small studio for her, and Lewis was able to sell enough of her work, including 100 plaster replicas of her bust of Robert Gould Shaw, the white Union officer who led an all-black regiment, to finance a sojourn in Rome. There she resided, apparently for the rest of her life, although she made several trips back to the United States. The authors found no references to her activities after February 1909. The distinguished archivist Dorothy Porter writing in the *Dictionary of American Negro Biography* found a reference in the *American Catholic Encyclopedia* (1911), giving her address as Rome, Italy. The date of Lewis's death is still unknown, but her life is one of the most interesting recounted here, and a number of her very striking sculptures are reproduced in photographs.

There are concise photographic portfolios of the sculpture of Richmond Barthé and Augusta Savage. We are told that little of Savage's work survives, and that "Some of her work disappeared under curious circumstances, the most mysterious being the theft of her magnificent bust of [W. E. Burghardt] Du Bois from the Harlem Branch of the New York Public Library [where] it sat undisturbed from 1923 until 1960.... But on October 26, 1960, the bust was discovered to be missing and has never been found. Some librarians believe that Savage...[sent] someone to get it and that she destroyed it, possibly because she no longer admired Du Bois."

A lay person, such as the present reviewer, will always judge a book of this sort largely on the quality of its color reproductions. There are some brilliant ones here, including Aaron Douglass's *More Stately Mansions* which is currently so popular that it graces the covers of at least two African-American history books. The painting, in somber magenta tones, shows black workers against the architectural background of monumental Egyptian symbols, a Christian church spire, and some modernistic towers echoing the architecture of Timbuktu. The work of Archibald Motley is jazzier in spirit, conjuring up the danger, the color, and the easy laughter associated with the exotic "Negro Renaissance" of the twenties. His spirit is bluesy and brassy, but in retrospect, almost innocent.

The book is well designed, with readable, attractive type on high-quality paper. It should be quite the collector's item but more than a coffee-table decoration. While its illustrations are far from commonplace, the overwhelming majority of readers will find its biographies both entertaining and informative. □

YES, BUT IT COULD BE WORSE

THE RAGE OF A PRIVILEGED CLASS
Ellis Cose
HarperCollins, $20, 192 pp.

Don Wycliff

In his novel *The Fall*, Albert Camus puts into the mouth of his narrator the story of "that little Frenchman at Buchenwald who insisted on registering a complaint with the clerk, himself a prisoner, who was recording his arrival. A complaint? The clerk and his comrades laughed: 'Useless, old man. You don't lodge a complaint here.' 'But you see, sir,' said the little Frenchman, 'my case is exceptional. I am innocent.'"

That story came to mind repeatedly as I read Ellis Cose's essay on the contemporary middle-class black experience. Maybe it was their actual testimony or maybe it was the way Cose presented it, but most of his interview subjects seemed baffled that, lo these many years after the high tide of the civil rights struggle, racism and inequity continue to limit the lives and fortunes of African-Americans, themselves included. In their different ways, they all seemed like the naive little Frenchman at Buchenwald. Except that, instead of "I am innocent," their protests ran, "I went to Harvard," or "I paid my dues," or "I was a loyal employee."

The jacket of this book should carry the line, "As immediate as today's headlines." Surely one variant or another of each of these stories has appeared somewhere in the *New York Times* and other newspapers over the last few years. That probably accounts for the shopworn feel of them—at least to this black reader. It is hard for me to believe that many of the whites who may buy this book will find them new—much less newly disturbing—but anything is possible.

Give Cose credit. He took on a formidable challenge—scarcely less formidable than that undertaken last year by those who argued in Washington against higher taxes on the wealthy. Cose, a *Newsweek* contributing editor, wanted to give expression to the genuine and, doubtless, justified anguish and "rage" of those who, like him and me, have enjoyed the finest fruits of the civil rights struggle and of those who gave their lives and labor to it.

At one level he succeeds. He does, indeed, give faithful, credible expression to the anxieties and dilemmas of that group. But the unspoken second part of his project—to create sympathy, or at least empathy, for them—is a failure. It could hardly have been otherwise; these are, after all, the dilemmas and anxieties of a "privileged class." And in a world where there are infinite claims on people's attentions and concerns and consciences, the problems of the privileged are understandably low on the priority list.

Cose does not help his cause with some of his arguments. His discussion of crime—rather, of the tendency to identify blacks with crime—struck me as particularly disingenuous. Not that his facts

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are wrong: It really is a tiny percentage of the black male population that is responsible for the crime that has created the identification in popular thought between blacks and crime. (That identification is not solely a phenomenon among whites. The Reverend Jesse Jackson's recent startling remarks on the subject indicate that blacks themselves often make the same equation.)

But in refuting whites who deplore the black crime problem and the problem of guilt-by-racial association that it creates for middle-class blacks, Cose employs an old and not entirely honorable debater's trick. The white critics' assertion of a public perception becomes, in the course of Cose's discussion, advocacy of that perception. Thus, he can write:

"Not even most bigots would argue that since the Mafia is dominated by Italians, crime is an 'Italian problem' that can only be solved by Italians....Yet that is precisely the approach many reputable people [he previously had mentioned Daniel Patrick Moynihan, James Q. Wilson, and Edward Koch as examples] are now recommending in regard to blacks. And it is a most pernicious proposal. To contend that we should penalize all members of a racial or ethnic group because some members are engaged in egregious behavior is to enter into a pact with the devil whose evil has no end."

Thus does Cose set up and destroy a straw man. Meanwhile, the real point and the genuine fact go unrefuted: Much of the hell being caught by middle-class blacks is the result of a public perception that black equals criminal, and the hell-catching won't diminish appreciably until the crime does. And no amount of intellectualizing will change that, because this has become an issue not of the head, but of the viscera.

The problem with a book as immediate as today's headlines is that it is as quickly outdated as yesterday's headlines. Ironically, however, it is one of yesterday's headlines—Colin Ferguson's apparently racially motivated shooting rampage on the Long Island Railroad—that may make Cose's book worth reading for a while to come. Sometimes, the rage of the privileged boils over into violence. □

GENDERQUAKES & AFTERSHOCKS

FIRE WITH FIRE
The New Female Power and How It Will Change the 21st Century
Naomi Wolf
Random House, $21, 353 pp.

Clare Collins

I was apprehensive about reviewing Naomi Wolf's new feminist treatise. After all, Ms. Wolf not only went to Yale but she became a Rhodes scholar. Besides, I'm not at all versed in feminist literature and have shied away from describing myself as a feminist because I am not adamantly prochoice. The unquestioning acceptance of abortion rights as the cornerstone of the women's rights movement seemed to count me out.

As it turns out, I am exactly the alienated audience for whom Wolf wrote her book. Among other things—many other things—Wolf argues that creating the perception that one's feminist cachet rests on the abortion issue has been the movement's undoing. As she puts it, "While a strong majority of U.S. women passionately endorse the *goals* of feminism, a large plurality avoids identifying with the movement *itself*. This estrangement impedes women from attaining the equality that they desire."

Just a few years ago in her best-selling *The Beauty Myth*, Wolf, who was a tender twenty-six years old at the time, argued that the major impediment to equality for women was society's obsession with female beauty. Now older and wiser at age thirty, she points the finger of blame not just at external forces but at women themselves who have failed to seize the kind of power that is rightly theirs. Why? Because the feminist movement has lost touch with its constituency, in large part by casting women as victims as well as requiring a uniformity of opinion rather than by focusing on getting more of what's right for women.

Wolf was inspired to write *Fire with Fire* after the Clarence Thomas hearings. She adorably refers to the reaction among women to Anita Hill's accusation of sexual harassment against the Supreme Court nominee Thomas as a "genderquake," which blew the lid off years of stifled anger and resentment. Outrage over the hearings led women to raise $6.2-million in campaign funds and elect an unprecedented twenty-five women to national political office. In this case, Wolf theorizes, timing was everything. The kind of debasement Anita Hill talked about was nothing new for women. "Rather, it was that male power eroded as the distribution of power into some women's hands reached critical mass," Wolf contends.

I do appreciate what Wolf has to say, especially her mission to create a brand of feminism that embraces all women. But there is still much work to be done toward creating an equal powerbase for women, and unfortunately Wolf becomes bogged down in statistical description when trying to make her arguments. After slogging through 353 pages, I'm not sure her material merits a book-length treatment. The same points are made over and over again, as if Wolf couldn't resist the need to drive home her theories with yet one more example. The breezy writing style, rife with generalizations and catch-phrases (the terms "gender apartheid" and the tremulous "genderquake" come to mind) reads like an extended magazine article. In fact, several excerpts from *Fire with Fire* appeared in *Glamour* magazine. Wolf even employs a favorite editorial device of women's magazines: the bulleted how-to piece, providing tips on how to implement her strategies. In a section titled "Psychological Strategies" for choosing the status of powerbroker over victim, she makes the following gratuitous recommendations: "Avoid generalizations about men that are totalizing: that is, that do not admit exceptions." And, "Visualize having the power we seek; then imagine the

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very worst thing that will happen if we attain it. Does it destroy us? Or do we survive and *have a good time*?" [Emphasis mine.] And here is my personal favorite: "Remember and take possession of the girlhood will to power and fantasies of grandeur." She must be referring to my childhood dream of becoming Miss America.

Wolf's own tendency toward sweeping generalizations does little to strengthen her credibility. Although the book jacket tells me Wolf was schooled in New Haven and Oxford and lectures frequently on women's issues, what informs her theories or what kind of solid research her conclusions are based on remains a mystery. Take Wolf's assertion about rape: "The judicial system unofficially maintains a spectrum of female guilt that determines whose hurt matters and whose hurt does not. The rape of a prostitute is fairly meaningless; the rape of a divorced working mother who drinks is slightly more serious; the rape of a churchgoing housewife, more serious still; and the rape of a nun may even matter." This might be true, but upon what verifiable evidence is such a charge based? A study of actual cases? A cursory reading of newspaper accounts? At the very least, such unsubstantiated generalizations are aggravating. At worst, they may be seriously misleading. Rape, as women have long known, is a notoriously hard crime to prove in any adversarial court proceeding.

At times, Wolf lapses into anecdotal, first-person accounts to illustrate a point. These actually come as a welcome relief from the polemics, helping her writing to become what she might describe as "reader friendly." And I especially welcomed Wolf's willingness to talk about her decidedly unclear views on abortion, since that is the cause of my own estrangement from feminism. "My friends will tell you that I am sometimes spacy beyond belief," she writes, providing an amusing list to back up that claim. Yet, Wolf says, not once has she neglected to use birth control. "It feels as if some dark part of my brain is saying... *This is a matter of life and death.*" She hastens to add she would never judge anyone else's decision to have an abortion. Yet, "For me, the other side of having reproductive rights is taking reproductive responsibility."

In the end, Wolf's philosophy comes down to this: For women to enjoy true equality they must usurp the economic stranglehold of men. Certainly this is true, at least in one sense. However, I can't help but think that the very audience who needs this message the most, the poor and disenfranchised, is least likely to benefit from Wolf's brand of feminism with a smiling but still elitist face. □

REVIEWERS

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WARMING TO A GLOBAL ETHIC

THE GNAT IS OLDER THAN MAN
Global Environment and Human Agenda
Christopher D. Stone
Princeton University Press, $21.95, 341 pp.

ULTIMATE SECURITY
The Environmental Basis of Political Stability
Norman Myers
W.W. Norton, $25, 308 pp.

Robert Worth

The past year or so has seen an unprecedented "backlash" against the environmental movement, particularly on global climate issues. Right-wing think tanks have been putting out books with titles like *Apocalypse Not* and *Environmental Overkill*. The *Wall Street Journal* has bristled with editorials against the "conspiracy" of environmentalist groups to delude the public about the dangers of global warming and the ozone hole.

The source of this media frenzy lies perhaps less with scientists than with the media itself. Five years ago, after the hot summer of 1988, the air was full of frantic warnings about melting icecaps and dwindling ozone. Since then the weather has cooled off and the opposition has made use of an insight that was there all along: prophecies are never safe. Particularly where computer models are asked to simulate vastly complex systems of weather and climate, there will be disagreements about the factors involved—CO_2, water vapor, emissions—as well as the likely results. Right-wing ideologues like Rush Limbaugh have made ample use of those uncertainties to call the whole question of global warming a sham. The ozone hole comes up for similar attacks. Thanks to implementation of the 1987 Montreal Protocol on Substances that Reduce the Ozone Layer, ozone depletion appears likely to decline in the future as chlorofluorocarbon production comes to an end. But the critics, instead of applauding this victory of environmental advocacy, insist that the whole thing was exaggerated in the first place.

Two new books, Christopher Stone's *The Gnat Is Older than Man* and Norman Myers's *Ultimate Security*, provide a welcome antidote to the shallow polemicism that has plagued media coverage of the environment. Both authors begin by reminding us that our uncertainty about climate change ought to provoke caution, not recklessness. Whatever the effects of our decisions, they will be with us for a long time; CO_2 stays in the atmosphere for centuries. Most climate researchers

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agree that there is a better than even chance that the climate will warm by at least 3.5 degrees over the next century. Even if the critics prove right and temperatures remain perfectly stable for the indefinite future, there are plenty of other problems to worry about.

In fact, as Stone suggests in *The Gnat is Older than Man*, to dwell too long on the uncertainties of global climate change is to grant a kind of PR victory to the other team. Fresh water sources around the world are suffering from overuse and pollution; topsoils are disappearing and farmlands turning to desert; fisheries are dwindling; toxic wastes threaten to seep into our oceans and lakes. And, as Myers argues in *Ultimate Security*, these environmental dangers are already turning into deadly sources of political instability. Myers takes four regional case studies—the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa, the Indian subcontinent, and Mexico—to flesh out his argument. In so doing, he demonstrates that fundamental problems like access to clean water—already a very sensitive issue in the Middle East—has always been a problem in the third world. While the pale-skinned North worries about increases in skin cancer from ozone depletion, millions of people in the South die every year from polluted-water diseases like diarrhea, cholera, and typhoid. Such disparities breed resentment, and they make it all the harder to achieve an international understanding on global issues like climate change and deforestation.

In the past, environmental advocates have tended to be Jeremiahs, howling at us for our ecological sins, pointing a finger at the coming apocalypse. Stone begins his essay with a borrowed phrase that typifies this approach: "The Earth has Cancer, and the Cancer is Man." To his credit, however, Stone turns around to condemn the self-indulgence and futility of such judgments. What the world needs, Stone argues, is less gloom-and-doom prophecy, less flaky idealism, and more careful thought about the legal, social, and economic issues surrounding environmental problems. As a professor of law, Stone is particularly concerned with the politics of international cooperation. He has a keen eye for the resentments and vaguenesses that undercut efforts like the 1992 Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit. Global solutions, he argues, are not always the best approach to global problems; general principles of international law are notoriously difficult to enforce. Instead, he favors bilateral and multilateral treaties. And he offers inventive solutions to problems that fall outside any current national jurisdiction. The Global Commons—the oceans and Antarctica—are increasingly polluted. But efforts by one nation to make another pay for transboundary pollution rarely succeed. Stone argues for the designation of international "guardian" groups that would be responsible for the welfare of specific areas or natural populations. He also suggests the creation of a Global Commons Trust Fund for the reparation of international environmental damage.

With a gentle insistence that is typical of his book, Stone criticizes other environmentalists for being too ready to blame the environmental crisis on Western culture, religion, or capitalism. He deliberately leaves the "spiritual and moral" dimensions of his discussion for last; and he brings to these questions an unparalleled sophistication and rigor. At the same time, Stone has (like his father, the famously contentious journalist I. F. Stone) a penchant for the outrageous. His previous book, *Should Trees Have Standing? Towards Legal Rights for Natural Objects* was an exploration of some of the issues that have been most embarrassing to mainstream environmentalists.

Stone readily grants that recognizing moral rights in nonpersons is an absurdity. Some form of legal right, however, might be the best form of protection, if administered by designated "guardians"—as in the example of the Global Commons. And it would be a welcome challenge to the narrow utilitarianism that tends to govern our thoughts about the natural world. Ideas like these, as Stone describes them, are still sketchy, vulnerable to critique. But they are important first steps toward a legal framework that would accommodate greater sympathy with the nonhuman world around us—creatures, objects, the landscape—than has ever been formally recognized before. To read them is to gather a philosophical idea that is, at the same time, a source of real political hope for the future. □

BETWEEN A ROMP & REDEMPTION

THE REST OF LIFE
Three Novellas
Mary Gordon
Viking, $22, 257 pp.

John B. Breslin

Three stories; three women; four men (one a father) to whom the women are bound by ties of obsession and memory; several children to whom the women are devoted, all but one boys, none fathered by their lovers. Such is the cast of characters in these novellas, Mary Gordon's first fiction since the generational saga of *The Other Side*, but what really matters here are the voices, in turn confessional, suspicious, celebratory, always questioning but finally, in the concluding story, grateful.

The first two stories, "Immaculate Man" and "Living at Home," echo one another most closely. Both are first-person narratives by women in their forties who have been married and divorced, have achieved professional independence (significantly, as a social worker with battered women and a psychiatrist for autistic children), and have fallen in love, respectively, with a priest and a foreign journalist, men temperamentally unsuited to settling down, or, some might claim, to growing up. What links these two nameless women is their physical attachment to their lovers, their fear of displacement by abandonment or death. Each story ends with the words, "I don't know"; and what they don't know is how they'll

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live without their men, so binding has the covenant of the flesh become. And yet their voices rarely sound a self-pitying note; indeed, they often reveal a sharp-eyed realism. Father Clement's late sexual awakening restores the narrator's regard for her body, but it becomes wearying in its very devotion: "Sometimes," she reflects, "I want a romp: athletic, careless, and desanctified." The journalist's mortal fear of even the simplest medical procedure mocks his itch to be in the thick of violent revolutions.

At other times, however, the clarity gives way to the moral obtuseness of the age and the peculiar blindness of any *égoisme à deux*: despite her concern for autistic children, the second narrator has no serious qualms about having an abortion and confines her outrage to the journalist's insensitivity in planning a trip at the time of the procedure.

The perils—and delights—of romantic love experienced in middle age bind these couples together in a way that family or religious community failed to do. What Mary Gordon has so evocatively caught in her narrators' voices is how precious and precarious such late-blooming pleasures can be, like the pleasures of the stories themselves with their shifting promises of meaning.

In the third and most moving of the novellas, "The Rest of Life," the focus shifts to youth and old age, but of the same woman. It is a long and long-resisted exercise of memory by a seventy-eight-year-old grandmother returning to Turin from America six decades after she was sent away in disgrace by her adored father; at fifteen she had fallen in love with a Byronesque youth a year older who subsequently committed suicide in a pact she failed to honor. Guilt, shame, loss shadow her subsequent life as nurse, wife, and mother, for no attachment, even that to her youngest and best loved son, can make up for her infatuation with the teen-aged romantic or her despair at the eclipse of her father's devotion.

Memory for her means something quite different from nostalgia; not the peaceful stream to be navigated at will but "the cataract, the overwhelming flood" she has kept dammed up. Even the city of her childhood becomes a menace when she tries to lead her son and his fiancée on a walking tour. Relieved at first because she finds no incriminating names in the phone book and no buildings remaining that might silently accuse her of youthful crimes, she becomes lost in streets she cannot remember, surrounded by buildings and wires that cast surreal shadows and remind her of Turin's reputation for black magic and hidden malice. Memory's power to shape and distort the present becomes palpable, but not inescapable.

For memory can also be cathartic, as she discovers when she decides to retrace alone the final journey with Leo to the medieval tower of their broken pact. She finds it half-demolished, marked off with a warning sign: *Pericoloso*, a place for uncomplicated young boys, so unlike Leo, to play their games. What she discovers and reclaims is her will to live, that deep desire for a shared happiness that led her to offer her life to Leo but stopped her from taking it. What she leaves behind is her guilt, her bitterness at life's unfairness. Coming back to Turin, to her son and his African fiancée, she discovers, like Gabriel Conroy at the end of Joyce's short masterpiece, that the dead absolve more than they blame the living: "the dead, being one and many, knew there was nothing to forgive." And so the story that began in dread ends in gratitude, transmuting memory into a hymn of celebration for "all that has gone before us, everything, all things, the living and the dead....*Si, grazie.*"

A rather different ending from the agnosticism of the heart that concludes the first two stories. Is it an epistemological advance or simply an idiosyncracy of old age? Perhaps the lyricism of that ending, with all its echoes of "The Dead" ("A boy like you died here. It might have been because of me."), makes most sense as a testament of independence. For the achievement of this reluctant pilgrim has been to become her own woman, freed in memory now from lover and father as she had already been freed by widowhood from a husband she respected but could never love. It is a freedom her sister narrators might well envy but would likely want to postpone. □

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Art, texture & tone in theology

Lawrence S. Cunningham

There is an old saw that says "every analogy limps" (*omnis analogia claudicat*). Be that as it may, analogies can be very illuminating as Frances Young, Cadbury professor of theology at the University of Birmingham (England), shows. Anxious to overcome the gap that exists between technical biblical exegesis and the Bible as the text of the church, she invites us to turn to music as a fruitful place to begin to think about biblical scholarship in relation to the life of the church.

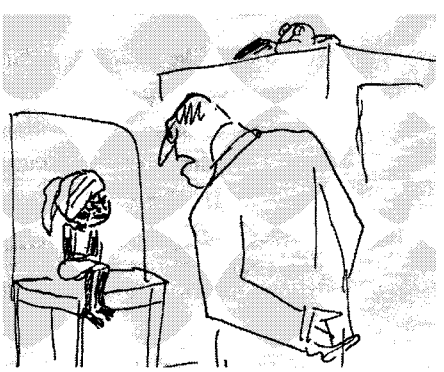
The biblical canon, in Young's telling of it, can be compared to a musical repertoire (of, say, Mozart) with selections from that corpus being the pericopes used, e.g., in the liturgy or the life of devotion. The rehearsal of the texts is the work of the exegete/students who plumb the text for meaning. Without their work, there is inadequate or shoddy music unfaithful to the text. All preachers, congregations, and individuals are performers who produce results that range from the masterly to the ordinary. The great saints and doctors are our *virtuosi*.

Virtuoso Theology: The Bible and Its Interpretation, *by Frances Young, Pilgrim Press, $15.95, 198 pp.*

Young's key insight is that in the Christian church the Scriptures are *performed* rather than merely *read*, an insight also advanced by her fellow countryman, the Cambridge theologian Nicholas Lash. As in music, attention must focus on the disciplined understanding of the text if the performance is to be faithful to the intention(s) of the author. She fleshes out her analogy by a focused attention on the reception and use of the Scriptures in the early church. She shows to what degree, for instance, the allegorizing tendency of a writer like Origen is held in check by the demands of the text within the community of believers.

Young insists that there is still much to be learned from these early "performers" who did not have the advantage of historical-critical studies but did have a profound sense of the ecclesial setting of the Scriptures. I very much like, for instance, her suggestion that the theory of recapitulation, championed by Irenaeus, is similar to the end of a musical composition which brings together the strands and directions of the piece into some kind of synthetic and harmonious whole; think, for example of the fugue. As Northrup Frye, from the perspective of a literary critic, once phrased it, the Scriptures are endlessly self-referential.

Many readers of this very rich and satisfying study will have their own moments of saying "Yes but..." but most, save the intransigently reductionistic, will learn and appreciate what Young is attempting to do. There are lessons here both for the professional theologian and for the pastorally minded. Readers who are sympathetic to works like Sandra Schneiders's *The Revelatory Text* (1991) which attempt to recover our sense of the Bible as sacred Scripture will welcome Young's project. Like Schneider, Young attempts to bring back into single focus the rich heritage of critical scholarship and the even richer resource which we, as believers, call the Word of God.



"All right, kid. Where did you hide the Dead Sea Scrolls?"

I have been a reader of the *Catholic Worker* for over thirty years. Like most readers I almost identify the paper with the rich illustrations done by artists like Ade Bethune and, above all, the late Fritz Eichenberg (1901-1990). Born into a secular German Jewish family, Eichenberg came to the United States as a refugee in 1933. He made a good living as an illustrator of the classics with his woodcuts for books like *Crime and Punishment* and *Wuthering Heights*. In 1949, now a Quaker pacifist, he met Dorothy Day at a meeting at the Quaker center at Pendle Hill. Day importuned him to produce art for her newspaper despite the fact that she could not pay him. Cheerfully, he complied and over the next forty years he produced striking woodcuts of which some, like the *Christ of the Breadlines* or his various saints like Francis, Benedict, Martin de Porres, have become signature pieces of the Catholic Worker movement.

Fritz Eichenberg: Works of Mercy, *edited by Robert Ellsberg, Orbis, $24.95, 109 pp.*

Robert Ellsberg, himself once the managing editor of the *Catholic Worker*, had the excellent idea of gathering a number of these illustrations together; they make up the present volume which is fleshed out by an introduction by Jim Forest, an interview with Eichenberg himself, and an essay by Dorothy Day written some years ago. Paging through this volume brought back a flood of wonderful memories: as a college student of meeting Ammon Hennacy, anarchist and quondam Catholic, peddling the *Catholic Worker* in front of

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Saint Patrick's on New York's Fifth Avenue; of hearing Dorothy Day, weeks before her death, speak to college students about the "unromantic" life at the Worker houses. Handsomely produced (the book's layout was designed by Eichenberg's widow), this is also a work of virtuoso theology which will be loved by those who love everything the Catholic Workers stand for as refracted through the imagination of a powerfully passionate artist.

In 1967 and 1968, Thomas Merton hosted some small gatherings of contemplative nuns at his Gethsemani hermitage to consider the problems and prospects of the contemplative life. His conferences and responses to questions put to him have been edited off tapes and make up this present volume.

The late 1960s were, to put it mildly, a time of great turmoil in the church and in religious life in particular. The hold of traditional religious life was weakening but what the future held (if anything) was still not clear. These conference notes reflect that uncertain *Zeitgeist* with its references to the race issue, to Vietnam, to protest within the church, and, interestingly, the first stirrings of the feminist movement. There is, as a consequence, a certain historically dated quality to Merton's words. On closer examination, however, there is still much that was prescient and insightful.

Of one thing Merton was mightily convinced: religious renewal (as well as church renewal more generally) did not mean much if it exhausted its energies about "changes" in the rule or customs of religious life. To indulge in such superficialities was to rearrange the proverbial deck chairs on the *Titanic*. Merton asked a more fundamental question, a question he would raise again in the very last conference he gave in Thailand in December 1968: What would happen to people if, by some odd stroke, the whole institutional support structure of monasticism was swept away? What would be left? His answer, in brief, was that the church always needs those who are serious enough about the contemplative life "to get together and live it and to make all kinds of sacrifices to do it, to give up other things to do it." In other words, the *witness* of monasticism and/or the contemplative life is quite different from the forms it might take.

Merton fleshes out the ramifications of his basic faith in monasticism by a two-pronged strategy: demanding that contemplatives get to the heart of what their life is about and holding out the challenge

The Springs of Contemplation, *by Thomas Merton, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, $22, 285 pp.*

to them to have the courage to seek ways to allow that life to be lived. This strategy might call for painful choices and human disappointment. It also demands enough modesty to seek help from other traditions to deepen an understanding of what contemplative living is all about. In the course of his conferences he notes the value of Zen as an antidote to an overly conceptualized view of Christian faith and points to the Hasidic belief that mysticism should be in the business of "mending" creation.

In the course of these conferences, there are valuable insights into traditional formulations of Christian spirituality, e.g., his understanding of "purity of heart" as being disposed to God; his note that "self-forgetfulness" might be best understood in terms of its reverse: not being too "self-conscious"; that our work and life are always more satisfactory when oriented toward the good of others; that being "prophetic" does not necessarily mean being noisily countercultural because in this age of the mass media being prophetic might just end up being "newsworthy."

And how does the contemplative life serve church and world? Merton spent his mature years thinking about this issue. His short answer is that the contemplative should be able to communicate, individually or communally, from the deep center or *ground* which is God. That Merton himself was able to do this explains why his writings are still read and his *persona* still inspires. *The Springs of Contemplation* is a valuable book for all those in religious life (it should be read in tandem with Merton's letters on the same subject, published in *The School of Charity*), but others will also profit from his shrewdly authentic observations on Christian spirituality.

Vauchez is one of the premier contemporary students of medieval spirituality. In this book (his major work on the history of medieval saints has never been translated into English) Vauchez makes a startling observation that it is the work of two streams of scholarship that made possible Vatican II's affirmation of the church as the "People of God" and not merely a perfect society hierarchically constituted. One stream was the theological recovery of the laity in the history of the church (e.g., by Yves Congar) and the other was the work of a number of distinguished historians who traced the emergence of the laity and lay piety in the early Middle Ages.

Building on the work of these historians, Vauchez shows how slowly Christians responded to the question of how to lead the evangelical or apostolic life (the *vita*

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apostolica) after the eleventh-century reforms initiated by Pope Gregory VII (died 1085). At least one strain of this renewal developed alternatives to traditional monastic or regular fraternities (e.g., the Patarines in Italy or the Beghards/Beguines in the Low Countries). These groups attempted to live in the world, honor work, and, not infrequently, the married state (e.g., in the Third Orders of the mendicant Franciscans) while being faithful to the gospel.

The Laity in the Middle Ages, *by Andre Vauchez, University of Notre Dame, $36.95, 350 pp.*

The permutations of these exercises in renewal were many as Vauchez's essays show: there were ecstatic mystics; married pilgrims; etc. A figure like Francis of Assisi is inexplicable without reference to this background just as Joan of Arc in the fourteenth century is only understandable against the tradition of lay female prophets abroad in the land.

What makes this book so valuable, however, is the lesson that Vauchez draws from his careful studies, lessons that are not without applications for today. First, the tradition of lay piety, in all its fits and starts, is not what the church demanded of people; it came from below. As Vauchez states it: the lay people both did not do what the church expected of them while, at the same time, demanding more of the church than it was ready to grant. Nonetheless, the common wisdom of the laity triumphed as canonists were, in time, forced to define a new reality in the church: lay religious (*laicus religiosus*).

The Laity in the Middle Ages will make demands on the reader not acquainted with medieval history, but it is well worth the effort for those who wish proof of the "thick" nature of the Catholic tradition and, further, as an indication that many of the contemporary experiments in a whole range of ministries and new spiritual experiments have good historical precedent.

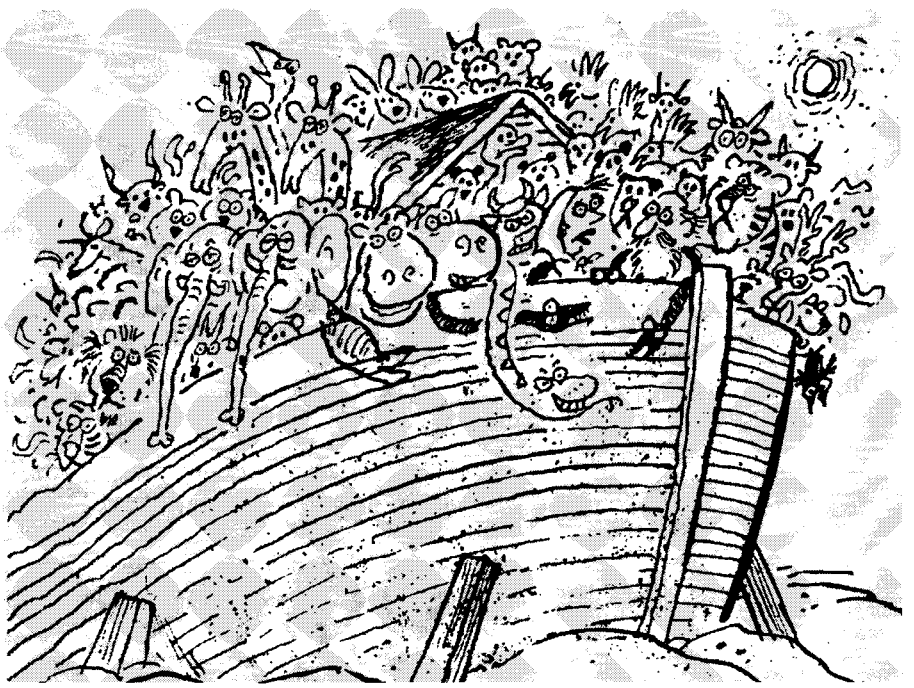
Many collegians (myself included) turned to Copleston's multivolumed *History of Philosophy* to bone up for the dreaded final examination in Philosophy 100. Gifted with a clear expository style and in command of the philosophical tradition from Thales to Wittgenstein, his work has been invaluable. Begun in 1946 as a seminary text, the history eventually expanded to nine volumes. (A tenth, on Russian philosophy, does not belong in the series.) It ended up a standard in the field.

Now in his late eighties (he was born in 1907), Copleston converted to the Catholic church while in public school, entered the Jesuits, did his tertian year in Germany (interrupted by hostilities), and spent most of his academic career commuting between Rome's Gregorian University and Heythrop College in England, teaching a semester in each place. Now retired, his last task was to transfer the venerable Jesuit college from the country to London where, currently, Heythrop is a college of the University of London. He spent his first retirement as a professor at Santa Clara University in California which he remembers with fondness and generosity.

Memoirs, *by Frederick C. Copleston, S.J., Sheed & Ward, $14.95, 228 pp.*

This rather typical life of the Jesuit intellectual would make for somewhat dull reading were it not that Copleston's vivid writing brings alive the places and characters he encountered during his life as an academic. He has vivid memories of Nazi Germany; he tells of his now famous BBC debates with Bertrand Russell and the logical positivist A. J. Ayers; he recounts some of his aristocratically dotty friends with whom he vacationed; he looks back on his public school days with some nostalgia (he was not beaten; he hated games; the food was not terrific; and homosexual liaisons were not mandatory). His final chapter is one of serenity and hope, shaped by the Christian optimism he gained from an appreciative reading of his Jesuit confrere, Teilhard de Chardin.

Among the literary categories that I have established for myself is the "airplane flight" book. Such a work must read well, be informative, and of a size to finish, say, in three or four hours, which means that it can fit into what I call lovingly my OBB (old blue bag). Copleston's *Memoirs* is exactly that kind of book. I recommend it, then, for frequent flyers or those who are at home with a leisurely evening to spare. □



"We'll feel like such idiots if it doesn't rain."

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CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 2)

ment." Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Massachusetts has a larger staff to service 2.5 million subscribers than Canada employs for its 27 million residents.

Canada provides quality health care for all at two-thirds of our costs. A major reason is emphasis on cooperation rather than competition. The profusion of high-tech gadgetry Mr. Koller cites in Western New York state is unheard of in Canada. Yet the quality of health care is fully comparable to that available to the great majority of U.S. citizens.

Mr. Koller also cites "detractors" who question employers' role in financing health care. But employer-linked health insurance is an anachronism, a relic of World War II wage ceilings that not only puts brakes on worker mobility but adds appreciably to health-care costs.

The author is on target, however, when he stresses the concept of health care as a right. For the third of our population now uninsured or underinsured, it is imperative that we move promptly to a recognition of that right for everybody on the same unquestioned level as education and police protection. EDWARD M. CORBETT

The author replies:

I believe the correspondents mistake analysis for advocacy. Alleged self-interest notwithstanding, were I the United States Health Care Engineer, a publicly financed, privately delivered health-care system along the lines of Canada's would also be my preference. In addition to the attributes listed by Mr. Corbett, the single-payer system is fundamentally more just than anything the private sector could produce, assuring a more equitable distribution of valuable limited resources.

However laudable or preferable the virtues of such a system, it remains politically untenable at the national legislative level. Whether because of the numbing complexity of the issues, or because our public has a less-cultivated notion of the commonweal (one of several differences between Canadian and U.S. citizenry), grassroots support is not strong enough to overcome institutions resistant to the signal changes a single-payer system would represent. Politics, alas, remains the art of the possible. CHRISTOPHER F. KOLLER

Christmas revisited

Humacao, P.R.

To the Editors: I hope it is not too late to comment on John Whitman's "story" ["Go Away! We're Celebrating Christmas"] in the issue of December 17, 1993. It goes to the very core of what Christmas is about. If only these sentiments were shared by all Christians, we would have a different world. Thank you for the sensitive touch of that article.

ERIC R. BUERMANN, O.S.B.

The prophets still speak

Tarrytown, N.Y.

To the Editors: Leonard Fein begins "Mending the World" [January 14] with two staggering assertions: First, that "[t]here is no authoritative Jewish statement on economic justice," and second, that "we [the Jews] do not care for authoritative statements."

And consider that 500 words later he speaks of the prophets' concern with Hillel's "second question—'If I am only for myself, what am I?'"

Of course, the prophets never issued a document called *Economic Justice for All*, as did the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in 1986. On the other hand, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel concern themselves with man's relationship to man, the greed of people, the needs of the poor and oppressed, and social reform (which includes economics) as revelation.

Are bishops more authoritative than the prophets? Are we who take seriously the teachings of prophetic Judaism *rejecting* authority? Are contributors to Fein's organization, Mazon, mistaken in considering Fein an authority on philanthropic issues?

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It is just Fein's type of confusion that has turned away tens of thousands of American Jews from the profound meaning of charity in traditional Jewish terms.

No, "the narrow self-interest of the Jews" cannot point "plainly to the assiduous pursuit of the values of the Jews...." Self-centeredness hardly ever inspires anyone. Universalism does.

MILTON GOLDIN

The author replies:

If Milton Goldin insists on (mis)reading my article as a plea for Jewish particularism, that is his right, even if its expression is a puzzlement. If he takes the words of the prophets as revelation, assumes that the prophetic tradition is more authoritative than all the competing visions and versions of Judaism (not less "revealed," if that's the issue), imagines that "taking [the prophets] seriously" is synonomous with taking them authoritatively, so be it. But no, I am not and do not pretend to be "an authority on philanthropic issues," nor is Mazon in any respect "Fein's organization." The idea for Mazon was mine, and I am happy, even proud, of what has been built on that idea. But the organization belongs to its builders—the thirty-two people who sit on its board, its professional staff (headquartered in Los Angeles, across the continent from my home), and the 34,046 people who, in 1993, contributed to its work in combating hunger.

As to my "type of confusion," I wasn't aware of being confused until after I read Mr. Goldin's letter. LEONARD FEIN

Elementally rearranged?

Port Washington, N.Y.

To the Editors: One phrase in your issue of January 14 was worth the price of admission: "Geriatrically enhanced," under "Et cetera," page 4. Truly beautiful. If they renamed the "Resources for the Aging" program at my parish "Fun and Games for the Geriatrically Enhanced," I just might go—even though, in truth, I'm just an old man.

Now, what do we use for the end of geriatric enhancement? "Death" and "dead" are so traditional, so simple, so short. We need something polysyllabic, with the right touch of with-it pomposity.

Of course the old bromides—"gone to meet his maker," "crossed over Jordan," "in Abraham's bosom"—have to be junked, since they reflect outworn superstitions that must be rejected in this age of science and sophistication. We need something trendy and free of any taint of religion.

"Geriatrically totaled?" Okay, but only if you get mashed by a semi while you're shuffling across the interstate. "Geriatrically finalized?" Too bureacratic. "Geriatrically perfected?" Getting closer, but not there yet. See what you can do.

LORING W. BATTEN

From the Editors: One suggestion is in the headline. For the faithful remnant, try "Celestially solaced."

Realism on priesthood

Heidelberg, Germany

To the Editors: Regarding the open letter from Father Joseph Breen ["Dear Bishops: Face Facts," Correspondence, December 3, 1993], the pastor's remarks are astonishingly realistic, and they do not apply only in the United States. But the central problem is our very kind, yet extremely autocratic pope. Against all hope, let us hope! (REV.) ALFONS BEIL

McConnell & 'NYPD Blue'

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: Since Frank McConnell is still being taken to task in your letters columns for liking "NYPD Blue," I'd like to enter the fray.

Anyone who watches the program, rather than harking only to its pre-performance hype—both in its behalf and in opposition to it—will be aware that it is not about violence. It is about the consequences of violence, a very different matter—and, since we live in a time when violence is more American than apple pie ever was or will be, a matter about which we ought to feel bound to think.

The program's consideration of these consequences is wide-ranging and highly intelligent, and its two detectives, Kelly and Sipowitz, in their attempts to be good cops and good men as their working lives pit them against the violent, are persuasive and touching, both when they succeed and when they fail, whether the enemy be physically violent or violators of order and justice through misuse of the system or misuse of words. MARIAN BURKHART

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More hungry boys

BOB LOGAN

In the spring of 1933, I was sixteen years old, plowing cotton from daylight to dark. The entire country was poor, but my family had been hit especially hard, going from the prosperous life of ranchers to being grateful for whatever work my dad, my older brother, or I could get. Every day I dreamed of leaving, not because I didn't like home. I did. But life was sad, especially watching my mother's stoic endurance. She'd had such hopes for her children—good educations, good futures—but the Great Depression had taken away all her dreams. Now her concern was whether there was enough food.

A train came through our Texas town every day always heading west. That train seemed my way out of the misery and sadness. So on a sunny day, without any planning, I jumped into an empty box car. On the floor of the car was a plain wooden plank, and on that board I quickly carved "Bob Logan gone west." As the train passed the outskirts of town, I tossed the board at a road crossing where I hoped someone would see it and give it to my mother.

After tossing out my only good-by note, I settled down to contemplate the hobo life I'd jumped into. There were other hoboes on the train, men who had been riding "rattlers," the hobo name for freight trains, for years. Some helped me, others frightened me, but all taught me something. I learned a great many things during the next eight months of my life. I learned how cold the ride is on top of a box car when the sun goes down; I learned to make a stew from whatever was at hand; I learned to harvest Idaho potatoes, Dakota wheat, and New Mexico fruit. I learned to sing hobo songs and to read hobo signs on buildings, the notes left to help other hobo "travelers." I learned how wonderful a familiar face can be and how to live under bridges, not trees; I learned the art of clever nicknames; and most of all I learned there are no free rides.

When the work finally ran out and winter invaded even the most southerly states, I learned that home was the place to be. So just as I'd left—without a friend or money—I headed back to Texas. After two days of traveling and hungry as only a sixteen-year-old without a meal in forty-eight hours can be, I left a train somewhere on the south side of Oklahoma City. I walked toward the closest eating establishment, a place with a sign proclaiming it "Ralph's Cafe," and I went inside.

Dirty, tired, and ravenous, I stood at the entrance and examined the crowd for any person who looked to be in charge. Eventually a short, slightly paunchy, forty-something man, Ralph, I assumed, walked over to me. He took a long look at the 140-pound teen-ager before him and said without any hint of either cordiality or sarcasm, "What can I do for you, son?"

"Well, I'm on my way home to my family in Texas, but I don't have any money, and I'm mighty hungry," I said.

"Are you willing to work for your food?"

"Sure. Yes, sir."

"Come this way." Ralph led me to a stool at the counter and pointed for me to sit. He went behind the counter, dished up a big bowl of vegetable soup, and put it in front of me. Then he turned to get some bread as I grabbed a spoon.

A few minutes later Ralph returned. "Want some more?"

"Yes, sir. This is good." He served up a second helping, and once I'd finished that, I felt ready to work, which I told Ralph.

"Okay, then. Come with me." He led me out the back of the cafe, first to a tool shed where he handed me a sling blade and then to the edge of two acres of overgrown, weed-covered land.

"Clear it," he said. Then he turned and headed back toward the cafe.

Surprised but still sixteen, I began cutting the waist-high weeds. The first few minutes were awkward work, but after ten minutes, I developed a rhythm and my young muscles were beginning to enjoy the movement. Just as I was starting to sweat, Ralph returned. He stood at the edge of the lot with his hands on his hips watching me.

Suddenly he yelled, "That's enough. Stop."

"What?" I said. "I've just started."

Ralph walked toward me, kicking aside the weeds I'd cut. He put out his hand for the sling blade and said, "I know, son. But there are more hungry boys out there who'll be coming along soon. And there ain't no free meals. Now give me that sling blade and head on home." □

Bob Logan, a retired engineer for the Atomic Energy Commission, now lives in South Carolina.

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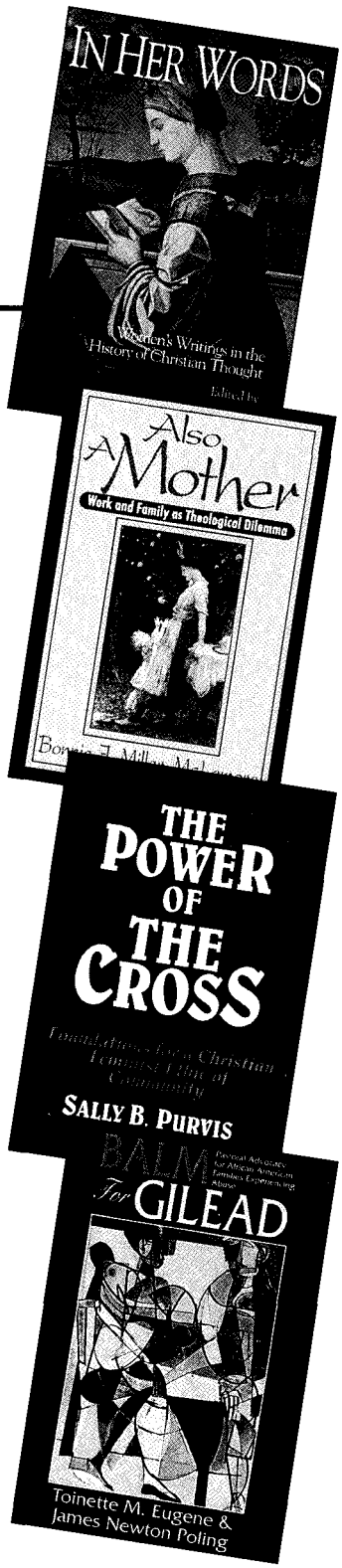
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